

Food Policy for Food Justice: Food Justice & GMOS

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Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are deeply entrenched in our current food system. Most of us don't even know when we are eating something that contains GMOs. So what is the big deal? And what do GMOs have to do with food justice? The corporations behind the development and proliferation of GMOs would certainly like us to quit asking questions. Since Our Kitchen Table is a food justice organization, it's our mission to ask such questions.

You probably eat GMOs **EVERY DAY.**



GMOs are plants or animals created through the gene splicing techniques of biotechnology. This experimental technology merges DNA from different species, creating unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and viral genes that cannot occur in nature or in traditional crossbreeding.

GMOs are part of the current food system in a big way, as reflected by the above info-graphic. And, they are something that the public has had little or no say in. Genetically modified organisms cause numerous problems.

1 Since most GMOs are not fully tested, we don't fully understand their impact on human health over a long period of time. According to sources like the Organic Consumers Association, GMOs have been linked to:

- Thousands of toxic and allergenic reactions.
- Thousands of sick, sterile and dead livestock.
- Damage to virtually every organ and system studied in lab animals.
- Increased likelihood of allergies.
- Damage of the immune system.
- Damage of the liver.



2 The growth of GMO plants causes genetic pollution when GMO plants infect the DNA strain of non-GMO plants. This contamination may pose public health threats by creating "super weeds" that require greater amounts of more toxic pesticides to manage; threaten extinction of rare plants and their weedy relatives that we need for crop and plant bio-diversity. These weeds are not only the traditional relatives of our domesticated plants; they also assist us in overcoming crop blight.

3 GMO plants and seeds create huge problems for small farmers if, through naturally occurring cross-pollination, GMOs being used at neighboring farms contaminate their plants. Farmers save seeds from their crops to save money and rely on proven seed stock. When their seeds show evidence of containing the GMO's DNA, the current US legal system allows companies like Monsanto to sue the farmers unless they pay royalties. Seems unjust doesn't it? Well, it is unjust. However, since agribusiness entities have lots of influence with the political system, the courts often rule in their favor, leaving both small farmers and the public on the losing side.

The good news is that an international movement to ban GMOs is gaining ground. Several dozen countries have already banned the use of GMOs; more countries are moving in that direction.

Our Kitchen Table supports banning GMOs in favor of biodiversity. The more biological diverse our diet is, the better off we will be. We also support transparency on the GMO issue. Most of us are eating GMO foods right now and don't even know it. In the US, food labels do not have list GMOs. Many states are attempting to pass legislation to require that GMOs are labeled, but the agribusiness sector is spending billions to defeat such efforts.

Our Kitchen Table practices food justice that rejects the use and proliferation of GMOs by:

- Providing heirloom seeds and plants to families involved in our home gardening program.
- Ensuring that our Southeast Area Farmer's Market vendors sell only non-GMO produce
- Working on public policy issues that promote greater transparency and justice in our food system.



OUR KITCHEN TABLE

OKTjustice.org

oktable1@gmail.com

616-206-3641