

NOTE

Hazards of GM Foods

Bharat Dogra writes :

The Independent Science Panel consisting of expert independent scientists prepared a major report on the hazards and problems of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in 2003. This report stated that GM varieties are unstable; and this may enhance the horizontal spread of transgenic, with the potential to create new viruses and bacteria that cause diseases and to disrupt gene function in animal and human cells. Many GM crops contain gene products known to be harmful. The Bt proteins that kill pests include potent immunogens and allergens. Food crops are increasingly engineered to produce Pharmaceuticals, drugs and vaccines in the open environment, exposing people to the danger of inappropriate medication and their toxic side effects. Herbicide tolerant GM crops -accounting from a majority of all GM crops -are tied to the broad-spectrum herbicides glyphosate and glufosinate ammonium which have been linked to spontaneous abortions, birth defects and other hazards.

Many scientists have been concerned with the risk of greatly increased resistance of antibiotics linked to GMOs. The European Union has called for an end to cultivation of several genetically modified varieties, including Syngenta Bt 176 corn, for the reason that it could generate resistance to antibiotics.

Sometime back Greenpeace, Germany highlighted the results of a study from the Research Centre for Milk and Foodstuffs in Bavaria which is reported to have been "kept under lock and key for three years." It contains the results of a farmer's milk samples that tested positive from GM DNA from Roundup Ready soy and Bt 176 maize. This possibility of contamination of milk due to GMOs exists in all countries where cattle-feed GM crops are being grown (including India).

Also there is the ethical dilemma faced by vegetarians who may find it difficult to select food when animal genes are introduced into plant genes. The choice becomes even more difficult (and not just for vegetarians) when even human genes are introduced into food crops (even rice). This dilemma is most difficult to resolve when GM foods are not specifically labelled, and in fact GM food companies try their best to avoid any legal requirement of specific labelling of GM food. □□□