

An overview of the gmo debate essay



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Jefferson, Valeria. "An Overview of the Genetically Modified Food Debate." 2009. *Genetically Engineered Foods*. Ed. Nancy Harris. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2003. At Issue. Rpt. from "The Ethical Dilemma of Genetically Modified Food." *Journal of Environmental Health* 69. 1 (July-Aug. 2006): 33-34. *Opposing Viewpoints In Context*. This article was written by Valeria Jefferson, a corresponding author for the *Journal of Environmental Health*, and the president of the National Capital Area Environmental Health Association located in Clinton, Maryland.

It provides an in-depth view of the potential benefits and intentions of GMFs, and the rationale behind those who oppose it. This article provides information for the reasons on both sides of the argument, giving me a better understanding of the effects GMOs could have on humanity and the planet, for better or worse. "With an ever-increasing global population, hunger in the developing world, and the health risks of pesticides, some experts view genetically modified food as a panacea," Jefferson explains. Genetically modified foods grow faster and larger than non-GMFs, and may be more resistant to pests, heat, cold, and drought.

This is accomplished by genetic engineering; genes that are transferred between (ANY) organisms. For example, a gene of a fish that lives in cold waters could be inserted into a strawberry so it can survive frost. Jefferson explains the current predicament of world hunger, and the potential alleviation possible from GMFs. "Many eat less than the minimum quantity required for survive, resulting in a mortality rate of 36 million deaths per year[...] In addition to alleviating world hunger, the production of GMFs can easily meet agricultural demands associated with with population increase."

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Those opposed to GMF argue that the potential risks simply outweigh the potential benefits- that the damage that has caused to the environment through the use of current pesticides and harmful chemicals causes less damage to the environment than the long-term effects of narrowing of the germ plasm through the development of GMFs. What that means is that the act of genetically modifying organisms weakens their immunity to environmental influences over time. Further more, the pollen produced by these plants cannot be contained.

As a result, genetic pollution of natural crop varieties and of wild plant relatives may occur. Genetic pollution is uncontrollable, irreversible, and permanent, posing a major threat to biodiversity and the bio-integrity of the entire life community. Jefferson ends with a powerful important consideration: “ Should we be ending hunger by causing genetic mutations we have not anticipated, or moving towards the goal of ending world hunger safely through application of sound scientific principles? “