

GENE TECHNOLOGY INQUIRY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Antibiotic Resistance Health Concerns

There is increasing evidence that genetic engineering of crop plants can open up pathways to new attacks on human health. Because the transfer of genes into an organism is not precise, unforeseen harm can result.

Herbicides, Insect, and Virus Resistance

Research has already turned up weeds that are now resistant to herbicides. There also appears to be a lack of knowledge about the purpose of plant viruses in the natural world. Genetic modifications cannot be recalled if they go wrong.

Roundup

Due to the ability to spray crops throughout their growing phase, the allowable Roundup residue in the dried soybean has been lifted from 0.1mg/Kg to 20mg/Kg (200 times). Note the potential harm to children, who often drink soy milk if they are lactose intolerant.

Yields and Dollar Returns

There are many claims of reduced yields. Some areas show higher yields but the balance appears to be against GE crops. Many farmers plant seeds adapted to their particular environment, which could explain why a concentration on a few varieties of GE plants can result in poor returns.

Biodiversity and Monoculture

Biodiversity, which is nature's own method of ensuring continuation of life, is being undermined by the use of monoculture farming. Organic farming is proving to be the most successful, in the long term.

Seed Saving

The ability of farmers to save their own seed will be lost. The aim of multinational biotechnology companies is to control the market in its entirety.

Organic Sustainable Farming

Instead of concentrating research funds on biotechnology, more effort needs to be expended in encouraging farmers to trial organic and other forms of sustainable farming. Australian soil is so degraded that the introduction of genetically engineered crops is likely to continue that process. There is also a caution that consumers will reject foods containing genetically engineered ingredients.

Risk Assessment

The lack of research in depth is noted in this section. Australia would be well-advised to exercise great caution and lead the world in sticking to the precautionary principle.

Export Opportunities

Could it be that our ministers, and their staffs, who are responsible for agriculture are unaware of the depth of overseas opposition to genetically engineered foods?