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Genetically Modified Crops: A Positive Perspective (/full-blog/2013/06/genetically-modified-crops- positive_2316.html)



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By: Rebekah McKinney, Staff Member

The controversy du jour of the agriculture community is the recent discovery of genetically altered wheat, which has not been approved for sale or commercial production in an Oregon farmer's wheat crop.[i] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn1) While the developer, Monsanto, was given clearance to legally test the product in 1998, such testing stopped in 2005.[ii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn2) While officials are frantically trying to determine how the genetically altered wheat made its way into the crop, wheat farmers are already feeling the effects of the discovery as Japan and South Korea have stopped all shipments of U.S. wheat.[iii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn3) One Kansas farmer has even filed a claim against Monsanto alleging gross negligence by driving down wheat prices.[iv] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn4)

With the current debate involving a mostly negative perspective concerning the use of such products, it is important to consider the benefits these technological developments can bring to society. Genetic modification is when a segment of DNA from one organism is extracted and then combined with another organism's DNA.[v] (<http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?>)

blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn5) This scientific development has enabled the scientific community to select desirable traits, such as resistance to herbicides, from one species and confer that trait onto another in ways that were previously thought impossible.[vi] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn6) Such scientific developments have the potential to lower cost of production, increase yield, decrease toxic runoff, and provide important employment opportunities in developing countries.[vii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn7) Furthermore, land once thought unusable and unproductive can now sustain crops, thus presenting opportunities for farmers where none existed before.[viii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn8) The positive effects of genetically modified crops have already been documented, with the National Academy of Sciences reporting an increased yield of 24% over traditional cotton plants.[ix] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn9) Furthermore, due to increased yields and changes in pesticide and seed cost, farmers experienced a 50% increase in profits due to the genetically modified crop.[x] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn10)

As the media frenzy surrounding the discovery of the genetically modified wheat unfolds, the issues surrounding these crops will undoubtedly be placed squarely in the spotlight of public awareness. As such, being aware of the potential benefits these crops can offer is critical to a thorough understanding of this hot topic.

[i] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref1) CBS News, Nonapproved strain of genetically modified wheat discovered in Oregon (May 29, 2013), http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-205_162-57586713/nonapproved-strain-of-genetically-modified-wheat-discovered-in-oregon/.

[ii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref2) United States Department of Agriculture, USDA Investigating Detection of Genetically Engineered (GE) Glyphosate-Resistant Wheat in Oregon, Press Release (March 29, 2013), http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/2013/05/ge_wheat_detection.shtml.

[iii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref3) CBS News, How did genetically altered wheat end up in Oregon field? (June 6, 2013), http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-57588150/how-did-genetically-altered-wheat-end-up-in-oregon-field/.

[iv] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref4) CBS News, Kansas Farmer Sues Over GMO Wheat Discovery (June 4, 2013), http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505123_162-57587625/kansas-farmer-sues-over-gmo-wheat-discovery/.

[v] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref5) John Charles Kanich, *Mother Frankenstein, Doctor Nature, and the Environmental Law of Genetic Engineering*, 74 Cal. L. Rev. 807, 809 (2001). See also Matthew Rich, *The Debate Over Genetically Modified Crops in the United States: Reassessment of Notions of Harm, Difference, and Choice*, 54 W. Res. L. Rev. 889, 890 (2003).

[vi] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref6) Maini Qaim, *The Benefits of Genetically Modified Crops and the Costs of Inefficient Regulation, Resources for the Future* (April 2, 2010), <http://www.rff.org/Publications/WPC/Pages/The-Benefits-of-Genetically-Modified-Crops-and-the-Costs-of-Inefficient-Regulation.aspx> (<http://www.rff.org/Publications/WPC/Pages/The-Benefits-of-Genetically-Modified-Crops-and-the-Costs-of-Inefficient-Regulation.aspx>).

[vii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref7) Id.

[viii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref8) G. Maisp et al. *Opinion: Don't Fear GM Crops, Europe!*, *The Scientist, News and Opinion* (May 28, 2013) <http://www.the-scientist.com/articles/view/articleNo/35578/title/Opinion-Don-t-Fear-GM-Crops-Europe/> (<http://www.the-scientist.com/articles/view/articleNo/35578/title/Opinion-Don-t-Fear-GM-Crops-Europe/>).

[ix] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref9) Jonas Karhage and Maini Qaim, *Economic Impacts and Impact Dynamics of Bt (Bacillus Thuringiensis) Cotton in India*, 109 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 11652, 11653 (2012).

[x] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref10) Id. at 11654.

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