

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

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We have all heard of genetically modified foods, but what is our understanding of them? Genetic modification is a specific technology that alters the genetic makeup of food. Food is modified by combining genes from different organisms, thereby altering the molecular or cell biology of the organisms. It is a transfer of genetic information and results in the creation of a new genetic combination.

Is this technology something that has come about in recent years? No, genetically modified products have been around for many years. They include medicines, vaccines, food ingredients and feed. The typical Canadian kitchen probably contains many foods and ingredients that have been genetically modified.

What are some of the reasons for modifying foods? Often genetically modified plants are created to have improved resistance to disease and eliminate the need for pesticides. Also, they are created to achieve desired characteristics such as faster growth, hardier varieties, higher nutritional value, increased yields and greater stress tolerance.

Are genetically modified foods helpful or harmful? Though these foods have potential benefits and offer hope for solving the world's hunger and malnutrition problems, they also pose some risks such as health and safety concerns.

Some advocacy groups feel that genetically modified foods are a health risk and that the food industry should be doing more in the testing of these foods. Also, there are no long term studies on the effects of genetically modified foods. Besides the potential health impact, there are other concerns like the environmental impact, allergens and some question whether businesses are pursuing profit without concern for potential hazards.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency enforces food safety standards set by Health Canada and it monitors quality, packaging, testing of food products and labeling. Health Canada conducts thorough safety assessments of all new products including genetically modified foods and sets regulations and standards that industry must meet before a genetically modified food is permitted on the Canadian market.

The federal government is committed to ensuring products derived from genetic manipulations continue to meet stringent scientific standards and also keep pace with new technology.

Labeling of genetically modified products is not mandatory

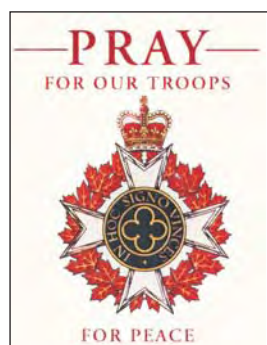
in some countries. In 2001 in Canada, a private member's bill that would have required mandatory labeling of genetically altered foods was defeated. There are no regulations governing labels for these food products sold within Canada.

Implementing a food labeling policy could present a challenge on how to best educate and inform the public about genetically modified foods without causing fear. Labeling would also increase the price of the food produced in Canada.

There is ongoing research into various aspects of genetically engineered food products. In 2006, a Calgary biotechnology company claims to have produced human insulin from genetically modified safflower plants, which offers great promise to people with diabetes.

As new developments in biotechnology research give us greater insight as to the potential benefits of genetically modified products, we need to also be aware of the possible impact on our health and environment. †

OUR LADY OF SHILO PARISH COUNCIL CFB SHILO, MANITOBA



On June 3, 2006, Armed Forces Day at the Canadian Forces Base in Shilo, the Pray For Peace sticker campaign was initiated. The insignia of the Christian Chaplaincy of the Canadian Forces distinctly reminds us *In Hoc Signo Vignes* (By This Sign Conquer). A new member of Our Lady of Shilo Parish Council suggested the sticker idea as a result of a trip to the United States where yellow magnet ribbons were imprinted with "Pray For Our Troops". Spiritual Advisor Father Arek Skwarek garnered the assistance of the base's graphics department to produce the 2½" X 1⅞" sticker. The chaplaincy has received inquiries from across Canada about these stickers, attesting to their visibility and inspiration.