

Letter to The Editor

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SELECTIVE BREEDING VS. GENETIC ENGINEERING

In the course of researching the safety of Genetically Modified (GM or GE) Foods, I have become aware of a lot of confusion regarding foods produced through selective breeding vs. genetic engineering (GE). Many people think they are the same - they are not.

For centuries farmers have used selective breeding (plants and animals) to develop desirable traits, such as drought tolerance, increased yields, disease resistance or improved taste. This is done through cross pollination, grafting and/or selective breeding within closely related species (e.g. 2 varieties of corn or between a plum and an apricot) with a shared evolutionary origin.

In genetic engineering, genetic material from one or more species (including viruses, bacteria, plant, animal and human) is artificially inserted (in a laboratory) into a completely different species (e.g. fish genes into strawberries). The process is unpredictable and dangerous, and can lead to unexpected allergies, toxins, new viruses and bacteria, and new diseases. 50 countries in the world require labeling of genetically modified foods. Surveys consistently show that 80-90% of people want GM food labeled. Yet, GE companies don't want us to know these foreign organisms are in our food.

If genetically modified foods are the safe, wonderful products GM companies claim, why are they afraid to put it on the label?

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