

go non-GMO

Growing numbers of people are deciding to shun genetically modified foods. Here's why » BY MELISSA DIANE SMITH



Consumer concern about laboratory created, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has led to a staggering increase in sales of Non-GMO Project Verified products—from \$0 in 2010 when the label first launched, to more than \$3.5 billion just three years later. Market researchers estimate that by 2017, non-GMO products will make up 30 percent of total food and beverage sales, with a value of about \$264 billion.

Concern over GMOs has also led, in part, to an increased interest in organics, because USDA certified organic products cannot intentionally include any genetically modified ingredients. Organic Trade Association surveys show that 22 percent of respondents now cite avoiding GMOs as a primary reason to eat organic food.

So, what's fueling this growing trend? Here are five often-cited reasons:

1 The desire for pure food. Many people simply don't want to eat so-called "Frankenfoods," in which genes are artificially inserted into the DNA of a crop or animal to create modifications.

2 The desire to protect the environment. GM seeds can easily spread through the air and contaminate organic and non-GMO crops. Neonicotinoid insecticides used in higher amounts on GM corn seeds have been implicated in colony collapse disorder in bees.

3 The desire to avoid pesticides. More than 80 percent of all GM crops are engineered for herbicide tolerance, which has led to an epidemic of herbicide-resistant "super weeds" and an astounding 527 million more pounds of herbicides being used since GM crops were first introduced in the US 16 years ago. That, of course, means more toxic herbicide residues end up in GM foods.

4 The desire to protect health. Animal research indicates serious health risks from eating GM foods, including infertility, accelerated aging, organ damage, and cancer. Veterinarians and farmers have reported dramatic improvements in pet and livestock health, especially in reproductive and gastrointestinal issues, when animals are switched to non-GMO feed. People, too, report better health when they go non-GMO.

5 The desire to fight back against GM seed companies. Large agrochemical corporations, such as Monsanto, are buying up seeds, genetically modifying them, patenting them so farmers can't save and exchange the seeds as they have done throughout history, and then suing farmers who have patented GM crops accidentally growing in their fields because of wind drift. Many shoppers refuse to spend money on products made by companies that use such business practices.

As consumers, we can protect the future of our food. If enough people simply stop buying products made with GMOs, manufacturers will feel the financial pressure to abandon GM ingredients. According to Jeffrey M. Smith, executive director of the Institute for Responsible Technology and producer of the documentary *Genetic Roulette*, this is already starting to happen. "We are seeing a food revolution like never before," he says, "I think it is just a matter of time before GMOs get kicked out."

Melissa Diane Smith is a nationally known writer and holistic nutritionist who counsels clients across the country and specializes in using food as medicine for a wide variety of conditions. She is the author of Going Against the Grain and Gluten Free Throughout the Year, coauthor of Syndrome X, and a non-GMO educator and speaker. To learn about her books, long-distance consultations, nutrition coaching programs, or speaking, visit her websites melissadianesmith.com and againstthegrainnutrition.com.

BEWARE THESE GM FOODS

If they're not labeled organic or verified non-GMO, avoid products made with ingredients that might be derived from GMOs. The nine GM food crops are:

- ▶ **CORN** (as in corn oil, cornmeal, cornstarch, corn syrup, fructose, and other corn-based ingredients)
- ▶ **SOYBEANS** (as in soybean oil, soy protein, soy lecithin, tofu, and other soy-based ingredients)
- ▶ **CANOLA** (as in canola oil)
- ▶ **COTTONSEED** (as in cottonseed oil)
- ▶ **SUGAR BEETS** ("sugar" In processed foods is almost always a combination of sugar from both sugar cane and GM sugar beets)
- ▶ **ALFALFA** (which is fed to livestock)
- ▶ **PAPAYA** from Hawaii and China
- ▶ Some **ZUCCHINI** and **YELLOW SQUASH**

—Adapted from the Non-GMO Shopping Guide (nongmoshoppingguide.com)

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