

GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster

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Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

Governments around the world have proposed biofuels, liquid fuels derived from plants, fungi or algae, as a solution to today's energy and environmental crises. But this alternative is as bad as, or worse, than fossil fuels.

Reasons to reject biofuels include:

- Loss of farmland for fuel land, increasing food prices and world hunger;
- Deforestation and conversion of prairie to cropland, causing a net increase in greenhouse gases;
- Increased reliance on eco-destructive pesticides; and
- Proliferation of dangerous genetically modified crops.

ActionAid, [I-SIS](#), and [others](#), have produced in-depth reports linking biofuels to increased food prices, increased greenhouse gases thru land use changes, and loss of income for local communities.

These reasons alone are sufficient to deem biofuels a poor alternative to fossil fuels. However, the last two bulleted items raise more grave concerns.

Genetically modified corn, cane, beet, and oil seeds like soy, rapeseed, and palm oil (among other biota) are used to produce biofuels. They require "intensive" chemical inputs with far-ranging consequences for humans, Earth's pollinators, and for the environment.

GM crops have been linked to [organ damage](#) and [reproductive failure](#) in mammals, and [sudden death](#) in plants. They are also linked to the [catastrophic bee die-off](#) occurring in the US and [elsewhere](#).

[GM crops contaminate](#) natural species, destroy biodiversity and bankrupt farmers who then [cannot sell to a No-GMO market](#). Biotech giants admit they [cannot prevent contamination](#) of natural fields.

Further, GM crops fail to yield as promised. "After more than 20 years of research and 13 years of commercialization," the [Union of Concerned Scientists reports](#), "we conclude that GE has done little to increase overall crop yields." When promised yields didn't materialize in India, many farmers – indeed, whole families – [committed suicide](#).

The [Organic Center](#) found that "GE crops have been responsible for an increase of 383

million pounds of herbicide use” in the U.S. from 1996 thru 2008. [Weed resistance](#) to these chemicals has skyrocketed. Resistant horseweed, ragweed and pigweed are ruining fields.

Terrifying for the biosphere, pesticides cause mass die-offs. [Yale Environment 360](#) noted that, “three new diseases have decimated populations of amphibians, honeybees, and — most recently — bats. Increasingly, scientists suspect that low-level exposure to pesticides could be contributing to this rash of epidemics.”

The 100-year experiment in chemical farming is a radical departure from 10,000 years of [sustainable agriculture](#). Chemical farming has proven its failure to humanity and ecosystems. When chemical companies get into the ag business, they aim to sell chemicals. You know a tree by its fruit. Monsanto ([Agent Orange](#), Vietnam), Dow ([DDT](#), Bhopal), and Bayer ([Zyklon B](#), Nazi camps) plan to increase the use of pesticides and biotechnology globally. They must be stopped.

If their history isn’t enough cause for alarm, these biotech firms suppress independent scientific study. In [Nature Biotechnology](#), Emily Waltz noted that the industry’s “reluctance to share its products with scientists ... is fueling the view that companies have something to hide.”

We can have little confidence in an industry that secretly foisted GM crops onto the world while banning independent investigation into potential harm. Waltz reports that so few papers turned up when one researcher reviewed the literature for toxicity studies on commercialized GM crops, that he asked, “Where is the scientific evidence showing that GM plants/food are toxicologically safe?”

A more logical and far saner and safer solution for the energy and environmental crises we face today is to develop programs that reduce energy consumption:

- Expand mass transportation;
- Buy local, and support community gardens and farmers markets;
- Enable the four-day work week;
- Restore public ownership of mass media which thrives on consumerism; and
- End biotech subsidies.

We need to shift the entire Western culture toward living simply, in harmony with nature. Instead of finding new fuel, let’s use less.

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