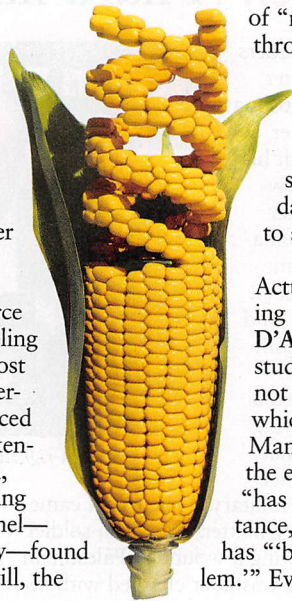


# GMOs: Safe to eat, says science

There is no evidence “genetically engineered crops have caused health problems in humans,” said Joel Achenbach in *The Washington Post*. So concludes a sweeping study released last week by the National Academies of Sciences. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have been a flash point ever since they were introduced in the 1990s as a means of boosting crop yields and easing world hunger. Fierce opponents push for mandatory labeling of GMO products—now used in most processed foods and including 90 percent of the corn and soybean produced in the U.S.—and claim these “Frankenfoods” might cause allergies, autism, and other diseases. But after reviewing more than 900 studies, the NAS panel—which had no funding from industry—found GMOs are as safe as other crops. Still, the study said, every newly introduced plant food should undergo safety testing, “regardless of how it was created.”

“As with climate change,” there will always be some people who won’t be persuaded by science, said the *Los Angeles Times* in an editorial. So much anti-GMO rhetoric is animated by the primal fear that “messing with nature is sure to have dire consequences.” But what advocates



No evidence of harm

of “natural” food often forget that through cross-breeding and hybridization, farmers have tinkered with the genetics of plants “for as long as we’ve been planting them and without catastrophe.” This report should offer relief to consumers, and dampen efforts to “force food makers to slap labels” on GMO foods.

Actually, the report is hardly a ringing endorsement of GMOs, said Chris D’Angelo in *HuffingtonPost.com*. The study found that the technology “has not increased the rate of crop yields”—which, after all, was the whole point. Many GMOs are engineered to resist the effects of pesticides, but that in turn “has resulted in insect and weed resistance,” which the report acknowledges has “become a major agricultural problem.” Even if GMOs are safe, they should be labeled, said Jason Kelly in *The New York Times*. “I run a GMO

company,” and I believe consumers should know not just whether a product was made using genetic engineering, but, “more important, why.” To reduce the need for pesticides, or protect a fruit from a virus? To create “a nonbrowning apple, potato, or mushroom” that won’t spoil so quickly? Shrouding GMOs “in secrecy only breeds doubt and fear.”