

## Why I'm Pro-GMO

Guest blog post by Kristie Swenson as she explains why she's pro-GMO.

The topic of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) is complex, challenging, and emotional, regardless of your stance. I have yet to have a straightforward conversation where we simply talk about one aspect of the GMOs because it's so hard to talk about just one aspect when there are so many sides to the issue. If one starts talking about the science itself, or the methodology used to genetically modify an organism, the conversation often goes on tangents like research, ethics, side effects, chemical use, labeling, corporations, and so on. It is so hard to separate each individual issue because they are connected and they are all valid issues that should be addressed.

Straight away, you should know that I am pro-GMO. I do not believe that GMOs are the silver bullet or the solution for everything, but I do believe that GMOs have merits that should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Do I think every single organism needs to be genetically modified? No, I don't. But I do believe that genetically modifying some organisms can provide us with benefits, and I think those modifications should be researched.

Take papayas, for example. In the 1990s, Hawaii's papaya crop was devastated by the ringspot virus. A Hawaiian scientist, Dr. Dennis Gonsalves, developed a virus-resistant variety of papaya through genetic modification and found a way to help the papaya industry. In Hawaii today, both GMO and non-GMO papayas are produced. (Read [this article](#) for an interview with Dr. Gonsalves.)

Am I saying that since I see GM papayas as a good thing, that all GMOs are a good thing? I'm not going to use one positive situation to blanket the entire topic of GMOs. I'm just saying that there are other industries that could benefit from genetic modification. The citrus industry comes to mind, as it's been hit by citrus greening (the scientific name is Huanglongbing, or HLB). In this particular case, biotechnology could save our citrus. Here are two articles that further explore the citrus greening issue: [Article 1](#) and [Article 2](#).

To me, genetic modification and biotechnology are tools. Having multiple tools to pick from enables us to determine which tool fits the best for the situation at hand. People will choose tools based not only on the situation, but also on their personal preference. You and I may be faced with the same situation, yet we may choose different tools to achieve similar outcomes. And that's ok – it is ok to have different opinions, different beliefs, different comfort levels.

I understand people have questions and concerns. It's so easy for us to look to sources of information with which we are familiar, or which share our perspective. In today's society, with the

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constant barrage of information and the vast amount of information available, it is so hard to sort out what's fact from opinion; what's twisted from what's true. What one person finds credible may not be a credible source for someone else. I encourage you to seek out sources of information that provide facts rather than perpetuating myths, to have respectful conversations with people who work with biotechnology, and to think critically about what you find. I encourage you to continue asking questions until you are satisfied with the answers, and to know **not just what** you believe, but **why** you believe it.