



Do we have a right to know?

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Science and technology. Though I have been accused my entire life of being a "Mother Earth" sort of person, I love science and technology. Where would we be without it? In addition to my connection to the world through the Internet (which also allows me to work from home) I have met countless wonderful new friends, caught up with some old friends and learned many things that I would perhaps never have known if not for the convenience of the World Wide Web. As for science ? what can I say except to coin the words of one of my favorite television characters Spock ? "Fascinating." (If you do not know Spock, I suggest you Google him?) If not for science we would not know why things grow, or how come leaves turn color in the fall. We would not have gel pens or Velcro if not for NASA research. We would not know how beautiful our universe is with out the Hubble telescope. I would not have new "eyes" if not for advancements in surgery and medications. But how far is too far when it comes to science and technology? There's a petition circulating the globe asking Walmart to NOT sell genetically modified sweet corn in its stores. I signed the Food and Water Watch petition last week. Because I cannot put words to what this is all about better than the folks writing about it, I am quoting an excerpt from an article at <http://www.cornucopia.org> [1]. "A coalition of health, food safety and environmental organizations said they have collected more than 264,000 petition signatures from consumers who do not want to buy the corn. The coalition includes the Center for Environmental Health, the Center for Food Safety, and Food & Water Watch. It said it is pressing 10 of the top national retail grocery stores to ban the corn, including Wal-Mart, Kroger and Safeway. It is also asking top canned and frozen corn processors including Bird's Eye and Del Monte to ban the modified corn. The coalition said General Mills and Trader Joe's have already indicated that they will not be using the Monsanto biotech sweet corn in their products. The coalition said the biotech corn would be used in canned and frozen foods as well as sold fresh, but will be indistinguishable to consumers from conventional corn because the U.S. government does not require genetically altered food products to be labeled. "Consumers deserve to know what's in their food, especially when there is a pesticide in every bite," said Charles Margulis of the Center for Environmental Health. "This whole, unprocessed corn has been spliced with genes that produce a risky, untested insecticide. Parents should be informed when food on supermarket shelves has been genetically altered." Monsanto, the world's largest seed company and a developer of genetically altered corn, soybeans, cotton and other crops, said in August it was preparing to launch a genetically altered sweet corn that marks Monsanto's first commercial combination of its biotechnology with a consumer-oriented vegetable product. The sweet corn seed has been genetically altered to tolerate treatment of Monsanto's Roundup herbicide, and to fight off insects that might attack the plants." Now, that said let me explain that I worked many years in the newspaper business and I totally understand there are two sides to every story, however in this case regardless of who is right and who is wrong about GMOs, I as a consumer deserve to know what I am eating. So at the very least, Monsanto should be required to track the sales of its GMO products. ALL labels should include information about what is in that product including the use of GMO seeds. It is then the responsibility of the consumer to read those labels and choose products they feel comfortable feeding their families. Yes, this is a controversial issue ? and one that most people avoid. But am I not entitled to live my life "organically" if I choose. This past weekend we discussed the fact that organic is more than a word on a label ? it is a belief, a lifestyle and to some of us a matter of good

health. I'm a little old-fashioned in my thinking perhaps. There are technologies that can benefit growers and gardeners without altering what God has provided first to us as nutritious fruit from plants that grow with only a little coaxing from us. Eating seasonally and growing your own food will bring benefits to your local community ten-fold. And, that is my opinion and is not based on any scientific facts, just my feelings. I am entitled to my feelings and so are you. As far as what you are purchasing at the grocery stores, it is also my opinion (insert publisher disclaimer here) that you are entitled to know exactly what you are putting into your mouth; and if you choose to NOT purchase those products, that is your privilege also. My personal mantra has always been ? ?Buy art from artists and buy food from farmers.? It may not always be the easiest thing to do, but at the very least, read labels and find out where your food is coming from?

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