

GM Organisms - Is GM the future? (334 WORDS)

DICTATION VOCABULARY: condoms – Pustzai – labelling/labelled – solely (*BE spelling*)

By far the most common genetically modified (GM) organisms are crop plants. But the technology has now been applied to almost all forms of life; nowadays you can find everything from pets that glow under UV light to bacteria which form HIV-blocking living **condoms** and from pigs bearing spinach genes to goats that produce spider silk.

GM tomatoes first appeared on British supermarket shelves in 1996 in the form of tomato puree, although a different fresh GM tomato had already appeared in the US in 1994. But the consumer uproar that surrounded GM technology did not erupt until February 1999. This was because a controversial study suggested that a few strains of GM potatoes might be toxic to laboratory rats. Those experiments, subsequently criticised by other experts, were carried out in Scotland by a biochemist named **Pustzai**.

What followed was an intense European anti-GM food campaign. Led in the UK by environmental groups and some newspapers, the campaign had far-reaching consequences. The climax was an unofficial suspension of activities involving the growth and import of GM crops in Europe and it led to a trade dispute with the US.

GM crops are today very rare in Europe: strict **labelling** laws and regulations are in place for food (DNA bar codes), and public opinion towards the technology remains largely negative. Several UK government reports have offered qualified support for GM crops and produce, though they argue that the economic benefits of the technology are currently small. Some African nations have also opposed engineered crops, even to the point of rejecting international food aid containing them.

GM produce has been taken up more easily in other countries such as the US (where it does not have to be **labelled**), India, China, Canada, Argentina, and Australia. Controversy has, however, erupted in the US over a type of GM corn which has been found in foods destined for human consumption despite its being approved **solely** for use in animal feed.

Pickrell, John. *Instant Expert: Gm Organism*. New Scientist. September 2006. Consulted on March 17, 2008. <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/opinion/gm-food/dn9921>

Vocabulary

accommodation
embarrass
diarrhoea
weird
conscientious