GMO — Good, Bad, What is It?

Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) foods are a current topic of debate, but there has been no conclusive evidence that they have any great impact on our health, though some research suggests the environmental effect is significant: “superbugs” and “superweeds” may be evolving to compete with GMO crops, and thus the use of toxic chemicals has increased to address these pests.

Science Behind Genetic Engineering

Genetic Engineering (GE) developed alongside advancements in scientific knowledge about DNA in the 1970s, and the first GE food was introduced to the market in the 1990s. Today, GMO foods are widely available, both in their whole forms and as sub-ingredients in products.

Many varieties of GE plants have been created to improve their resistance to pests, disease, or herbicides. This could mean that these crops have the potential to reduce farmers’ energy usage, improve water and soil quality, or even help with food scarcity issues by producing better yields.

GE animals are not yet part of the food market; however, some livestock are raised on feed containing GE ingredients.

How to Identify Non-GMO Foods

In the United States, GMO foods are not currently required to be labeled or identified. The Non-GMO Project identifies ingredients as “high-risk” if they are likely to be produced from GMOs. These “high-risk” ingredients are then tested to determine if the type used in a specific brand’s product contain any GMOs. Foods that meet the requirements of the Non-GMO Project can use a label identifier on their packaging to show that they are compliant.