

# GM POSITION OVERVIEW

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My position on genetic engineering is based on my experience particularly with food crops, and is based on a number of concerns regarding oversight, big business “insider trading”, abdication of responsibility in the pursuit of so-called science and the actual evidence of success.

From a moral/ethical point of view it is my contention that the supporters & exponents of genetic engineering promote some kind of ‘confused’ utilitarianism – an ignoring of consequentialism on the one hand versus a promotion of what is supposedly in the greatest good of the largest number of people and then also the existence in this position of one of the fundamental disputes in utilitarianism – the basis or sequence given to the consideration of consequences and who’s values? Any monistic deontological approach in my opinion falls flat based on the Kantian categorical imperative and its application of intended result and motive, while intended result may make the grade, motive is a major question mark in this technology.

It is in effect, in my opinion, only possible to consider genetic engineering of food from a values based ethics approach combined with some aspects of deontology and particularly utilitarianism perhaps using a new ethical matrix of sort.

My position is based the following facts and concerns regarding genetic engineering. This is a summary of the main points only.

## Science vs sense & ethics

- Many claims, very little basis for them and no true peer review
- Ineffective review in SA i.e. toxicological testing body
- Ignorance or lack of presentation of ancillary information when providing supporting evidence
- Vested scientific interest
- Ignoring the existence of long proven and used practices

## Big business

- Three US companies = all technology
- Lack of precautionary protocol & Polluter pays principle
- No/abdicated responsibility and why
- Terminator technology
- Labeling issue
- Actual failures
  - o Cotton in SA & India – more hectares but less tonnage
  - o Maize & Soya – yield loss, super weeds and increased herbicides
  - o GM Sweet potato
  - o rBGH Hormone and Monsanto response to farmers

- Undue and unacceptable influence over governments and regulatory bodies

#### Science and its guarantees

- This is a clear case of believing and accepting because supposed knowledgeable science and scientists know best
- Science has made various initial absolute claims only to be proved horribly/spectacularly wrong later i.e. tobacco for 50 years, asbestos and climate change
- The questionable independence of the austere bodies of science and medicine

#### In Conclusion – my practical position

- I am not adamantly opposed to genetic engineering
- It needs to be applied with more circumspection
- The educated consumer needs to be heard and considered
- Points around conflict of interest & ethics need to be addressed
- The GE industry needs to answer the questions and present all the facts so that a true ethical position can be determined on the question of application of genetic engineering in our food