

Genetically Engineered Foods and the Chronic Misrepresentation of Facts  
*The Biggest but Most Overlooked Issue in Bioethics*

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Although bioethicists have addressed a wide range of issues posed by genetic engineering, they have overlooked the most crucial one: that the implementation of this technology in food production has been chronically dependent on misrepresentation. Basic facts of biology (and about the technology itself) have been untruthfully portrayed; false assertions have been issued by scientists, scientific institutions, and government agencies; unsettling evidence has been suppressed or significantly distorted; and scientists who performed the research that produced the evidence have been unjustly attacked, defamed, and demoted.

Even eminent institutions such as the US National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the UK's Royal Society have promoted genetically engineered (GE) foods through deceptive means, with the latter not merely twisting facts but forcefully and unfairly attacking well-conducted research (published in *The Lancet*) that detected food safety risks — while besmirching the reputation of the scientists who conducted it.

The remarkable extent of the misinformation has been solidly documented, and it has become so entrenched and ostensibly authoritative that the opinions of most journalists, legislators, and even of most scientists have been molded by it.

One of the false claims that has caused the most confusion is the routine assertion that there's as strong an expert consensus about the safety of GE foods as exists regarding the reality of human-induced climate change. However, in marked contrast to the climate issue, there has never been a genuine scientific consensus regarding GE foods. Many experts have concluded that the genetic engineering process poses higher risks than conventional breeding, and respected scientific organizations such as the Royal Society of Canada, the British Medical Association, and the Public Health Association of Australia have issued cautions.

Compounding the confusion, many proponents of the GE food venture equate any critique of it with the denial of climate change, even though several critiques have been generated by scientists endeavoring to bring the venture into greater alignment with scientific principles — and are diametrically different from the campaign to discredit climate science.

In light of the evidence, it's clear that genetic engineering has introduced a new dimension of unsustainability in agriculture: *ethical unsustainability* — because the massive venture to reconfigure the genetic core of the world's food supply has become crucially dependent on the distortion of truth and could not survive an honest airing of the facts.