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# Reaction Paper

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Genetically modified foods have become an essential part of people's daily routines. However, most people keep questioning the benefits of genetically modified organisms. Genetic modifications promise to improve agricultural efficiency and increase farmers' profits. Michael Pollan provides one of the most fascinating reviews of genetically modified foods, their weaknesses and potential benefits. In his book *The Botany of Desire*, Pollan tries to persuade the audience to be more reasonable, considerate, and thoughtful when dealing with the scientific inventions in agriculture. In his book, Pollan shares abundant information on the way genetically modified organisms change the essence of agriculture and food products. Still, one of the most interesting in his book is the chapter titled "Desire: Control/Plant: The Potato."

At the center of Pollan's argument is an agricultural experiment he himself conducted to test the quality, safety, and effectiveness of genetically modified crops. Potato has become the central object of his experiment. The main theme of the chapter and, probably, the entire book, is that genetic modifications cannot serve as a relevant answer to the scarcity of quality food products on the planet. In other words, genetically modified organisms cannot save the planet from hunger, because their benefits are questionable and their dangers are quite common. The history of potatoes can be traced back to the times of the Incas, who "figured out how to grow impressive yields of potatoes under the most inauspicious conditions, developing an approach that is still in use in parts of the Andes today". The Incas and the ways in which they organized their agriculture told a simple truth: potatoes could survive the most challenging weather conditions without being subjected to heavy chemicals and genetic modifications. The Incas did not seek to

change the environment; rather, they developed a new spud for every environment. Not surprisingly, what looked chaotic and disorganized to the Western eye brought unbelievable crops to the Andean populations.

One of the most interesting arguments in Pollan's analysis is that the process of incorporating genetic modifications into agricultural foods is associated with huge variability. As a result, even when one and the same gene is used, farmers end up growing a huge diversity of different plants. No less interesting is the evidence that organic farming can be equally or even more effective than the most popular industrial farming methods. Pollan describes the farming experiences of the family of Mormons, whose potato products are distinguished by a wonderful taste, healthy looks, and the absence of any side effects on health.

The use of genetically modified organisms in agriculture raises many questions. The long-term impacts of GMOs on human health have not been sufficiently explored. The growing emphasis on industrial methods of agricultural production does not leave enough space for organic, healthy farming. The farmers who want to survive in the world driven by economics have to give up their organic principles for the sake of fast genetically modified profits. Certainly, genetically modified organisms may be safe and productive, and the problem is not in GMOs. The main problem stems from the lack of awareness and scientific knowledge. Pollan is right: "this may be insignificant, we don't know. We don't really know what **Bt** is doing in soil in the first place. We also don't know what effect all this new **Bt** in the environment may have on the insects we don't want to kill". In a similar vein, no one knows whether and how genetically modified crops can benefit or harm the humanity of the future. Therefore, it is quite logical that the most promising genetically modified potatoes grown with lots of love and care are fated to spend their days under the porch, giving their place on the kitchen table to organic foods.