

HIGH HOPES FOR HARVESTS

Genetic Modification (GM) has had a bad press here. Some call it Frankenstein, fearing it will terrify its maker, and so dismiss it out of hand. Because we are able to do certain things, doesn't automatically mean that we should. We are warned of the possibility of causing damage which we are then unable to undo. For example, a genetic modification in the laboratory may seem advantageous but if allowed on to the field, long term there may be unforeseen consequences. That is the risk. We should never be foolhardy but without taking some risks we achieve nothing. When smallpox vaccination was introduced, cartoonists produced grotesque drawings of human beings having bovine ears and horns. Today we know that the disease has been wiped out and we remain human!

Genetic modification of crop plants has great potential for good. Some dubious insecticides and herbicides could become unnecessary. Food plants resistant to drought could be grown in near desert conditions. Persons currently lacking a nutritious diet could benefit from nutrients added to their staple food crop. Harvest yields could be increased to supply a growing demand. We know that unscrupulous businesses are exploiting GM for selfish gain but this is a separate matter. We in the West with an abundance of food must be slow to oppose anything which could better life for the majority world where hunger is endemic. Sadly, Christian Aid have come out against GM and may well have to eat their words eventually.

'Artificial' risks, such as gambling, taken for selfish gain, are despicable. Risks taken for good purposes are commendable. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he expressed his gratitude and that of the gentile churches, for Prisca and Aquila; they had risked their lives for Paul. Risks involved in genetic modification also have a good purpose, namely to improve life. Almost certainly we have already benefited from GM ourselves but public opinion in Europe has meant this has been downplayed. May we soon catch up with the pioneers!

Look up Romans 16 v.4

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