

Genes are like a set of instructions for making a living thing. So, while some see the industrialisation of farming as the solution to many global problems, others believe that factory farming has already gone too far, and that we need to return to a more natural way of feeding people. More generally, some people see GM crops as just one part of the growing use of technology in agriculture and the increasing power of a few huge globalised agri-businesses. When scientists found that they could change (or modify) things became possible, including genetically modified (GM) foods and other crops. We can now artificially create plants that produce more food than natural ones, crops that can resist attacks by pests, rice that can grow in salty water plants that work like medicines, and many other amazing things. To some people, this makes the future look very exciting. For example, farmers in a poor country may buy GM seeds from one of these companies because they seem cheaper and produce better able to save the seeds from their crop for the next year. There are concerns that GM crops could have a disastrous effect on agriculture and the environment in general. In 20 years time they say, we will all be eating GM food and the global problem of starvation will be solved. Flower or elephant or fish or human: they are all what they are because of their genes. They might, for example, kill natural plants and take over from them. Also people say that we do not know enough about the effects of GM food on the human body. Instead, they will have to buy more seeds from the company. However, not everybody is so sure that this is a good thing.