

The Future of Food

A Film by Deborah Koons Garcia

www.thefutureoffood.com

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With unprecedented clarity, Deborah Koons Garcia's documentary, *The Future of Food*, distills the complex technology and key regulatory, legal, ethical, environmental and consumer issues surrounding the changes happening in the food system today -- genetically engineered foods, patenting, and the corporatization of food -- into terms the average person can easily understand. It empowers consumers to realize the consequences of their food choices on our future.

The Future of Food opens with historic footage from the 1900's. We learn that nitrogen fertilizers were developed out of the nitrogen bomb technologies of WWI and insecticides were a by-product of WWII nerve gases. These seemingly small increments established the dominant agricultural paradigm of today, chemical agriculture. Footage from a summit of scientists at Asilomar on the Monterey Bay Peninsula in 1975 on the new technology of genetic engineering reveals a prescient understanding of the issues that would define the next few decades -- concerns about science gone awry weighed against the magnetism of technological possibilities.

The Future of Food reveals the personal story of Saskatchewan farmer, Percy Schmeiser, who was sued by the agbiotech giant, Monsanto, when some patented Roundup-resistant canola plants were found on his property. Percy had farmed for over 50 years when a threatening letter arrived from the multinational corporation demanding money from him and his wife for crops they had never planted. Percy and Louise battled Monsanto for years, all the way to the Supreme Court. We visit farmers in Oaxaca, Mexico who discovered their native corn crops had been cross-pollinated with biotech corn even though growing biotech corn was illegal there. Interspersed with the farmers' accounts are interviews with environmentalists, academics and eminent food policy authorities.

As Garcia brilliantly lays out the pieces of these puzzling developments, we are ultimately given a clear image of just how quickly and radically our food system is changing. We learn how patenting of life is now permitted, though it was considered immoral by America's founding fathers. Without consumer labeling, there is no traceability and no corporate responsibility for problems with GMOs. Regulatory bodies -- such as the Food & Drug Administration, Dept. of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency -- are headed by former employees and directors of Monsanto and other corporations. Universities previously relied upon for objective analyses are now servants of the corporations that fund them. We examine myths about biotech food: Has it been tested for health effects? Is it the same as traditional food crops? Do we really need it to feed the world?

Within this somber context, Deborah Koons Garcia has created a film about hope. Although regulatory agencies have failed us to date, and corporations like Monsanto are bullies seeking to foist untested and potentially dangerous crops on the world, Garcia believes that when informed, consumers will say no to transgenic crops and choose clean, healthy foods that insure our security and environmental integrity for the future. However, time is of the essence. With the aggressiveness of corporate biotech, we have only a very short time to choose which of two very different food systems we want for the future.

Varied Audiences, Many Uses and Critical Acclaim

Released in 2004, *The Future of Food* has been a key tool in the American and international anti-GMO grassroots activist movements and played widely in the environmental and activist circuits. The film is widely acknowledged for its role in educating voters and the subsequent success of passing Measure H in Mendocino County, California, one of the first local initiatives in the country to ban the planting of GMO crops. Indicative of its popularity, the *Future of Food* showed to a sold out audience of 1,500 at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco in 2004, a benefit for Slow Food, where it was introduced by Alice Waters.

In September 2005, The Future of Food made a highly acclaimed national theatrical premiere at Film Forum in New York, followed by a tour of more than a dozen major American cities in the fall. Applauded by technology writers, food policy experts and environmental activists, the film has been shown around the world -- from a plaza in Oaxaca, Mexico to the Jerusalem Cinematheque, and in citizen screenings all over the world -- from India, Kenya, and Bulgaria to Brazil and Indonesia. It screened at a wide variety of professional gatherings, including the Midwestern Organic Farmers Convention, the Organic Trade Association 2005 trade show and conference in Chicago, and the American Dietetic Association convention. Columbia and New York Universities showed it to their students.

In 2006, the film continues to be shown globally – to the public and at conferences, such as The Soil Association Convention in London and the Japanese Organic Farmer's Convention. Garcia was the keynote speaker at the Nutrition and Health - State of the Science Conference put on by Dr. Andrew Weil and Columbia Medical School in New York City. The film has had sold out premiers in Paris, Amsterdam and London and will be screened in Turin, Italy for Slow Food's "Terra Madre 2006," a gathering of 5,000 farmers and food producers from around the world; and at the Conference on Women and Food Solidarity in Dehra Dun, India. The film continues to enjoy the support of a wide range of organizations -- from the Organic Consumers Association, to the Soil Association of Britain, to Slow Food.

The Future of Food has been featured at numerous film festivals including The Margaret Mead Film Festival, The American Film Institute/ Discovery Channel SILVERDOCS Festival, The Slow Food Film Festival, and the New Zealand Film Festival. The film has won awards for "Best Doc" at deadCENTER Film Festival; audience awards at both the Ann Arbor Film Festival and the Ashland Independent Film Festival; and the "Human Rights Award" at the Taos Film Festival. It was chosen by the Oscar screening committee of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences as one of the best documentaries of 2004. **The Future of Food has been translated into Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, and many other languages.**

- **For more information, visit www.thefutureoffood.com**
- **For images, visit <http://lilyfilms.com/stills300/>**

*** * * Deborah Koons Garcia, Filmmaker * * ***

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, filmmaker **Deborah Koons Garcia** has called California home for over thirty years. Her film production company, **Lily Films**, is located in Mill Valley, California just north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Her most recent film, **The Future of Food**, examines alarming issues surrounding the rapidly increasing corporate domination of our food supply. It is the first major film to cover the history and technology of genetic engineering and the complex implications of untested genetically engineered crops on the environment and unlabelled foods on consumers. Garcia's other film credits include **All About Babies**, **Poco Loco** and **Grateful Dawg**, a documentary featuring her late husband, Jerry Garcia, of the Grateful Dead.

The Road to Filmmaking

A highly formative experience occurred at age fifteen that would later influence **The Future of Food**. Garcia won first place at the Cincinnati Engineering Society Science Fair for her foray into the world of plant manipulation with her experiment, "Polyploidy in Plants." In genetics, polyploids possess multiple sets of chromosomes where the normal number is two sets. Seed and plant breeders induce this process by treating seeds and plants with chemicals or radiation in order to develop mutations. From her two resulting specimens, one set untreated and healthy, and the other, large, thick and deformed, Garcia's instinctual revulsion surfaced. "I could see at fifteen -- I would eat this food from these plants, but those I would not eat." She thought to herself, "This is weird. I am going to keep up with what goes on in genetics because if I can do this in my bedroom, what will scientists do in the future? What will happen to people who eat this kind of food?"

As a student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Garcia fell in love with filmmaking when she first picked up a Bolex. She was intrigued by film's ability to convey powerful ideas and imagery. By the time she graduated from college she had become a vegetarian and begun to educate herself about how food is grown. She knew that someday she would explore her interest in agriculture and food policy through film. In 1974, Garcia moved to the Bay Area and later received a Masters of Fine Arts at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Garcia's original film company was **Signs of Life**, which she started in 1984. Over the course of the next fifteen years, she produced films under Signs of Life, including **Poco Loco**, a much-admired feature film that won awards at the Philadelphia, Rivertown and Central Florida Film Festivals. Her powerful educational documentary series, **All About Babies**, narrated by Jane Alexander, won several awards, among them a Cine Golden Eagle and a Gold Medal from the John Muir Medical Film Festival. Garcia was the instigator and chief Creative Consultant for **Grateful Dawg**, a documentary about the musical friendship between her husband, Jerry Garcia, and David Grisman. In 2000, Garcia started **Lily Films**, choosing the name of a plant with a big, showy flower to evoke the vibrant and thought-provoking films she wanted to create. **The Future of Food** is Garcia's first major film under Lily Films.

Garcia completed **The Future of Food** in July 2004 after three years of intense work. Initially, she envisioned a film on pesticide use, but her research led her to more alarming global issues surrounding genetically modified crops -- their uncertain and potentially disastrous effects on human health and the environment; the ethics of gene patenting; and corporate control of the food supply by companies like Monsanto, an agricultural biotechnology conglomerate and frontrunner in the use of genetic engineering.

Garcia realized film would be an excellent way to inform people about these complex issues. She is most proud of the film because it has inspired citizens all over the world. "This is a film that is not just watched, it's used. It motivates people to take action, even if it's just voting with their fork. **The Future of Food** has already helped influence policy. It's exciting to think that the film could have a role in creating a healthier future for everyone."

***** What People Are Saying About The Future of Food *****

"*The Future of Food* provides an excellent overview of the key questions raised by consumers as they become aware of GM foods... [The film] draws questions to critical attention about food production that need more public debate."

- **Thomas J. Hoban**
Nature Biotechnology Magazine

"Congratulations on a masterful achievement. The film covers all the key agricultural, social and political issues surrounding the industrialization of agriculture and genetic engineering."

- **Craig Sams, Chairman, Soil Association, Great Britain**

"If you eat food, you need to see *The Future of Food*."

- **Newstarget.com**

"There's a stunning revelation in almost every scene. Grade: A"

- **David Sterritt, Christian Science Monitor**

"...sober, far-reaching polemic against genetically modified foods... Quietly inflammatory. Unsettling."

- **Stephen Holden, The New York Times**

"A rarity! Learned and persuasive."

- **James Crawford, The Village Voice**

"[Garcia] finds a way to save the world while savoring it."

- **Stephanie Woodard, Breathe**

"In less skillful hands, a film about genetically modified (GM) food could have been tough sledding for regular folks to sit through. But *The Future of Food* is an engaging and lucid presentation ...an eloquent, compelling introduction to one of the most complicated, critically important and criminally overlooked issues of the day.

- Denise Caruso, AlterNet
(Denise Caruso is the former technology columnist for The New York Times and serves on the board of the Independent Media Institute.)

"Ultimately, the film is a call to action -- for people to think more about the consequences of their food choices and to use their consumer power to push for labeling and regulation."

- Carol Ness, San Francisco Chronicle

"There is power in knowledge and that is the importance of *The Future of Food*. Deborah Koons Garcia has investigated the implications of GMO's, and her film is an important tool toward ensuring a healthy world for everyone."

- Alice Waters, Owner, Chez Panisse

"Garcia has won the first of many battles in a war that may be as significant for our future as the war on terrorism..."

- Deirdre Boyle, Cineaste

"Comprehensive and chilling..."

- Jason Silverman, Wired News

"Unraveling the complex web of market and political forces changing the very nature of the food we eat, *The Future of Food* packs a full serving of essential information but leaves enough room for hope and inspiration to take root."

- Mollie Katzen, Cookbook Author

"It is the best documentary thus far to paint the big picture of what GMOs are all about. When people see this film they are shocked, and many are motivated to take action."

- Eloise Engman, GMO-Free Maui

"This stylish film is not just for food faddists and nutritionists. It is a look at something we might not want to see: Monsanto, Roundup and Roundup-resistant seeds, collectively wreaking havoc on American farmers and our agricultural neighbors around the world. In the end, this documentary is an eloquent call to action."

- The Telluride Daily Planet

*** Recap of Key Points Raised in the Film ***

Our food system is undergoing unprecedented change, although most Americans are unaware of the extent and ramifications of these changes. Globally, there is increasing corporate domination of our food supply from field to table. A major new development is genetic engineering -- one of the most complex issues of our time with virtually limitless potential impact on the entire biological world. This technology is difficult to grasp and regulatory, agricultural, consumer, health and moral issues all need scrutiny. At the same time, there is an enormous groundswell of concern for the environment and interest in supporting small family farms and organic agriculture. Below is a summary of the wide range of key issues addressed in *The Future of Food*, each worthy of extensive critical thinking and commentary.

Monumental Changes in Our Food System:

- There are changes taking place in our food system today that could create a world radically different from what we have now.
- Genetically engineered crops, the patenting of seeds and plants, loss of family farms and total control of our food supply by multinational corporations are just a few of the trends that have many thoughtful citizens alarmed.

Technology:

- **Technology of genetic engineering:** How is medical biotech similar to and different from agricultural biotech? To what extent is there a closed environment, and what happens “downstream” of these technologies after they leave the lab?

Moral and Ethical Issues:

- **Issues, rights and responsibilities:** What are the issues and rights and responsibilities of all involved – corporations, consumers, and government?
- **Patenting of life:** America’s founders thought the patenting of life, such as seeds, was immoral. Patenting of life is now permitted.
- **Privatization of nature:**
 - Corporations are patenting both GMO and non-GMO plants world-wide, including plants that have evolved in nature, or have been naturally hybridized, and belong to the commons.
 - If this trend continues, impoverished countries will have to pay to use the plants that originated in their countries.
 - Whoever controls the seeds controls the food.
- **Universities serve corporate agendas:** Universities were intended for objective research. Under financial pressure, academic research is now defined by corporate contributions.

Social Issues:

- **Consumer issues:** Labeling is required in most of the world, but not in the United States. “Right to know” legislation proposed by Boxer and Kucinich has never been voted on by Congress.
- **Political issues:**
 - There has never been a nation-wide vote where consumers approved GMO technology in the food supply and the environment.
 - Recently, local municipalities have started “anti-GMO” initiatives. To disempower these citizen campaigns, Monsanto is enacting “pre-emption” legislation where legalities pertaining to seeds are determined at the state, not local, levels.
- **Health issues:**
 - Without traceability, there is no way to know if a food containing genetically modified organisms is responsible for a health problem.
 - DNA from bacteria and viruses are used to genetically modify plants and animals. Antibiotic resistant DNA is used as markers to determine if the traits have expressed themselves in the plant and to identify which corporation controls the patent on that plant.
- **Biotech is presented as a way to feed the world:**
 - Enough food exists in the world, but is not distributed to those in need.
 - Many farmers are now landless -- pushed off their land -- because third world debts to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have caused countries to grow cash crops for export to pay off debt.
 - Humanitarian issues need to be addressed, foremost, with compassion.

Agricultural and Environmental Concerns:

- **Agricultural issues:** Historically farmers were expected to “fence in” their farms; now farmers are expected to “fence out” seeds and pollen from crops they don’t want, which is impossible. Huge government subsidies, by means of taxpayer dollars, support agbiotech companies, and drive U.S. prices for crops below the world market.
- **Environmental issues:** GMO corn has already contaminated original corn landraces in Mexico, a source for germplasm. Bt Corn, engineered so that corn borers die when they eat the Bt engineered into the corn, also kills Monarch butterflies. Concerned scientists fear “green deserts” of lifeless, engineered crops.

Regulation:

- **Legal issues:**
 - Corporations are playing both sides of the field. On the one hand they argue that GMO crops should be permitted because they are “substantially equivalent” to non-GMO crops. However, in order to obtain patents, corporations argue the contrary, that these same crops are unique.

- Patent law has taken precedence over farmers' rights. When GMO crops contaminate the fields of farmers who do not want the GMO crops, the farmer is regarded as having infringed on the rights of the corporations who produce the GMO seeds.
- **Conflict of interest in regulatory bodies:** Many officials at the three main regulatory bodies -- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency and Food & Drug Administration -- are former employees of Monsanto and its subsidiaries.

The Future of Food:

- **Consumer interest in pure food:** When informed of the issues, consumers are voting with their dollars for clean, non-GMO food.
- **Support for organic agriculture:** The sales of organic foods, which by law are the only realm of our food supply that does not permit GMOs, are booming as are farmers' markets and community supported agriculture initiatives.
- **Food revolutions:** Agbiotech is a revolutionary method of food production. However, the return to the sustainable food movement is also revolutionary. Where is each headed, what are the implications of food choices, and which revolution will define the future of food?

***** Resources *****

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

www.calgeefree.org

The Californians for GE-Free Agriculture Coalition is unique in that it brings together farmer-based organizations with consumer and environmental groups to halt the introduction of economically and ecologically destructive GE crops. Their mission is to stop new GE crop plantings in California.

The Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Food

www.thecampaign.com

An organization dedicated to creating a national grassroots consumer campaign for the purpose of lobbying Congress and the President to pass legislation that will require the labeling of genetically engineered foods in the United States.

Center for Food Safety

www.centerforfoodsafety.org

CFS works to protect human health and the environment by curbing the proliferation of harmful food production technologies and by promoting organic and other forms of sustainable agriculture. CFS engages in legal, scientific and grassroots initiatives to guide national and international policymaking on critical food safety issues.

Community Agroecology Network

www.communityagroecology.net

CAN is a U.S. based non-profit organization. Their mission is to develop a network of rural communities and U.S. consumers to support self-sufficiency and sustainable farming practices. Farmers and consumers working together CAN make a difference.

Consumers' Union

www.consumersunion.org

Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, is an independent, nonprofit testing and information organization serving only consumers.

Crop Choice

www.cropchoice.com

CropChoice is an alternative news and information source for American farmers and consumers about genetically modified crops, corporate agribusiness concentration, farm and trade policy, sustainable agriculture, wind farming and alternative energy, and rural economic and social issues.

Environmental Commons

www.environmentalcommons.org

Environmental Commons supports communities democratically reaching decisions regarding the adoption and growing of genetically modified organisms, transgenic organisms and livestock. They advocate for the prohibition of uncontrolled cultivation and expansion of GMOs.

Genetic Engineering Action Network

www.geaction.org

The Genetic Engineering Action Network (GEAN) is a diverse network of grassroots activists, national and community non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmer and farm advocacy groups, academics and scientists who have come together to work on the myriad of issues surrounding biotechnology.

Greenpeace

www.greenpeace.org

Greenpeace is a non-profit campaign organization, with a presence in 40 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, that addresses worldwide environmental issues.

Northeast Resistance Against Genetic Engineering

www.nerage.org

neRAGE is a network of biotechnology activists, organizations and concerned individuals working in the north eastern parts of north America. Their website is updated regularly with the latest GE news from around the world

Organic Consumers Association

www.organicconsumers.org

The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) is a grassroots, non-profit, public interest organization which deals with crucial issues of food safety, industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, corporate accountability, and environmental sustainability.

Organic Seed Alliance

www.seedalliance.org

Organic Seed Alliance is a nonprofit public charity that supports the ethical development and stewardship of the genetic resources of agricultural seed. They accomplish their goals through collaborative education and research programs with organic farmers and other seed professionals.

PANNA

www.panna.org

PANNA (Pesticide Action Network North America) works to replace pesticide use with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. As one of five PAN Regional Centers worldwide, they link local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens' action network.

Percy Schmeiser

www.percyschmeiser.com

Site presents the historic lawsuit of Monsanto vs. Schmeiser; Schmeiser is the Saskatchewan farmer sued by Monsanto when some of Monsanto's Roundup-resistant canola plants were found on his property.

Say No to GMOs!

www.saynotogmos.org

Extensive information on the complex and controversial issue of genetic engineering. Their goal is to inform the public and encourage grassroots action that will insure consumer choice and a genetically viable future.

Sierra Club

www.sierraclub.org

The Sierra Club's goal is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives

Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org

UCS is an independent nonprofit alliance of more than 100,000 concerned citizens and scientists. They aim to augment rigorous scientific analysis with innovative thinking and committed citizen advocacy to build a cleaner, healthier environment and a safer world.