

## WHAT CONNECTS MARGARINE AND DENIM?

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Almost half of the cotton produced world-wide is genetically modified. Most people are not bothered by such a statement. It is only considered a scandal when an “organic” label is emblazoned across genetically modified cotton, as was recently the case with Indian cotton. Otherwise, jeans and t-shirts made of genetically modified cotton are considered adequate clothing to wear while destroying fields of genetically modified crops in Germany. Many a female opponent of genetically modified food would rather starve than eat “Frankenfood”, but is not at all bothered by her intimate relationship with her genetically engineered tampon. Maybe this impression is false and the anti-gene technology movement is secretly suffering under this dilemma, but is just not able to admit to it. However in Europe, hardly any money is earned with gene technology, unless people are protesting against it. Even the financial donations seem to be free of the blemish of gene technology; nobody is put off by the banknotes, although everyone must surely know that banknotes are made of genetically modified cotton.

But even normal people who are not serving any eco-giant have a schizophrenic relationship to gene technology. It is accepted in medicine and has long been adulterating top sporting achievements. But heaven help us if the same methods are applied to our vegetables! We block out any information that would show us to just what extent gene technology has infiltrated numerous areas of our lives. No other technology has so far had such a positive track record. Only recently, people died after eating organic vegetables, but nobody has yet died from eating genetically modified food. Cynically, we should actually be wishing for an incident or accident to be caused by gene technology, so that we finally think about the difference between danger and risk. There have been accidents in the field of red gene technology connected with gene therapy, but this has been overlooked, as we value gene technology in this sector. We don't want to know, just as someone who has bought an expensive organic carrot doesn't want to know if there was any extra value in it. After all, he believes there is. But although faith can move mountains, it is nevertheless not used in mining. Maybe science is also partially to blame for the fact that gene technology is met with such opposition. Maybe for too long we have only communicated knowledge? Have scientists for the most part completely misunderstood the fears of the people?

The scepticism could have another reason: Modern life sciences shake at the foundations of belief and one doesn't talk about religion with friends, even if belief has long been simply a matter of a better world full of organic vegetables and constant temperatures. Belief and science don't get along. Science will constantly make mistakes and learn from them. Belief systems are always based on infallibility. How can a dialogue develop when one side knows everything already and at the same time demands no risk? In the end then it all depends on whether superstition and opinions are given the same value as provable facts. Indeed, the facts speak for gene technology, but then who cares?