

GM Food Newsletter

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Happy Birthday !!

GM chicken



In a farmhouse located far away, two genetically modified (GM) corns are discussing which shirt they should wear in a birthday party...



GM Corn A: I'll wear this red shirt for tomorrow's birthday party.

GM Corn B: No no no... the green one looks better!

GM Corn A: I'll wear the red shirt, as it perfectly matches my yellow body. By the way, have you bought any birthday present yet?

GM Corn B: Oh... I've forgotten that. But, whose birthday are we celebrating tomorrow?

GM Corn A: Hmm... I heard it's a GM chicken born last month.

GM Corn B: Wow... a GM chicken? I know there're other types of GM plants besides us, but not GM animals. Can animals be genetically modified, like plants?

GM Corn A: Of course. GM animal is an animal in which the genetic material has been changed by modern biotechnology. The techniques involved are very complicated; scientists can add or remove DNA from animals. In fact, scientists have successfully produced GM rat, cow, goat, pig, sheep, fish... and of course chicken!

GM Corn B: But why do scientists need to produce GM animals? Are the GM ones better than the conventional ones?

GM Corn A: Through genetic modification, scientists can add some characteristics to the GM animals. Currently, most GM animals are produced for scientific research, such as making drugs to cure disease. For example, the GM chicken we'll visit tomorrow has been modified to produce drugs for treating cancer. On the other hand, some researches aim to improve farmed animals for food use, so as to make them grow faster, more nutritious and healthier. Examples are GM cows that will not contract "mad-cow" disease, GM pigs with higher level of Omega-3 in their meat and GM salmon that can grow faster.

GM Corn B : It seems that GM animals have many potential benefits. I believe many GM animals are sold as food and....

GM Corn A : WRONG!! WRONG!! WRONG!! Although GM animals have been used in scientific research, they are not currently available for food use in the international market. Indeed, researches involving GM animals are regulated strictly by different national authorities. That's why we've to travel a long way for the party tomorrow, because the GM chicken is not allowed to leave his home without permission!!

GM Corn B : I see... but why? Why GM animals are not sold as food for human consumption?

GM Corn A : It's for the matter of food safety! Food safety is always the most important issue before a food can be sold for human consumption. Don't you remember? As GM crops, we were examined by many experts before we can be put onto the international market? If GM animals are to be sold as food in future, they must be thoroughly examined by many different experts.

GM Corn B : Regarding examination and test for GM crops, I know there are internationally recognised guidelines for experts to follow. Are there any similar guidelines for the examination of GM animals?

GM Corn A : Good question!! Indeed, the internationally recognised food-standard setting organisation—Codex Alimentarius Commission, is working on the guidelines for examining GM animals. The guidelines will cover all areas related to food safety, so as to make sure that all GM animals available for food use are safe for human consumption.

GM Corn B : Okay, I understand now.

GM Corn A : To conclude, the production of GM animals is a new technique and the food safety of products derived from GM animals must be closely monitored. GM animals can be used as food only if they can pass the examination and are proved to be safe for human consumption.

GM Corn B : Alright. I know what birthday present suits GM chicken most.

GM Corn A : Really? What is it?

GM Corn B : Running shoes — exercise can keep him healthy so that he can pass the examination easily!



For more information on GM food, please visit our website

www.fehd.gov.hk/safefood/gmf/index1.html