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The futures of genetically-modified foods: Global threat or panacea?

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Highlights:

- Genetically-modified foods (GMFs) represent a complex socio-economic phenomenon;
- Public acceptance of GMFs is limited by people's level of understanding;
- GMFs' future evolution will be determined by a series of inter-related factors;
- Regulation, coexistence, and risk/value perceptions determine the future of GMFs;
- A value-based perspective should be used to improve GMFs marketing communication.

1. Introduction

Food is arguably the most important product of consumption, which is essential for sustaining life [1]. Food contributes to the continuous regeneration of our bodies and provides the basic energy for living. On the other hand, food can be a source of exquisite hedonic experiences and has strong cultural connotations related with refinement and fashion, especially in well-developed countries and wealthier social communities.

Despite the green revolution introduced globally in the 1970s, the exponential growth of human population creates significant challenges for the future. Nearly 870 million people suffer today of malnutrition, most of them being localized in the poor countries from Africa, Asia and South America [2]. Climate change and environmental degradation are currently reducing the available agricultural land, and creating extreme climatic conditions, which result in additional problems to feeding the world population [3]. Some possible alternatives envisaged by food futurologists include insects, laboratory-grown meat, or algae [4].

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