

Investigating Attitudes Towards Genetically Modified (Gm) Foods: A Study of Sri Lankan Agriculture Undergraduates

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Genetically Modified (GM) foods, derived from organisms altered through genetic engineering, offer potential solutions for global food security but continue to be a point of debate. This study explored the attitudes of Sri Lankan Agricultural undergraduates towards GM foods, focusing on consumption, labeling, regulation, and perceived health and environmental impacts. Among 330 participants from the Agricultural faculties of the State Universities were selected and given a self-administered questionnaire. The analysis revealed that 88% of the respondents were familiar with the term GM foods, with 43% of them having gained knowledge about GM foods from social media. There was a positive correlation ($P < 0.05$) between their familiarity and the current studying academic year. Respondents were categorized into three groups: those accepting GM foods (54.30%), those rejecting (12.77%), and those uncertain about the acceptance or rejection (21.08%). A distinct difference in perceptions between the accepting and rejecting groups was evident in beliefs about GM food safety and environmental effects. However, across all groups, there was a strong consensus on the need for GM food labeling (>90%). About 19% of the participants shared opinions among the groups including a requirement for GM food regulation within the country and 18% of the participants mentioned the lack of clarity on GM regulations. More than 18% stated that requirement for more information to make informed decisions about GM food. In essence, this study revealed that while a majority of agricultural students were aware of GM foods, their perceptions varied greatly, with a notable call for more transparency and education on the topic. Comprehensive education and clear communication on GM foods are crucial to shaping informed opinions and decisions, even in scientific communities.

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