

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKeorEMkFGY> w auto]

Watch video to pharmaceutical company in 2010.

Frankenstein goes shopping - Archive 1994 but many issues v relevant in 2012

After cloning human embryos, designer babies, eggs from foetuses, and old age mothers you may wonder what is going to hit us next. The answer is designer food - and then perhaps designer flowers and designer lawns for designer gardeners - who knows. This week (Jan 1994) the Co-op food retailing group announced a ban on selling beef, pork or other meat with added human genes. They have also banned "superveg" containing genes from animals, and will be labelling all [foods](#) where new genes have been added from other species.

Why all the fuss? Last year 62,000 mutated animals were born in the UK as a result of gene experiments, many with added human genes. Human genes have been added to cows, pigs, rabbits, sheep and fish. The pigs grow fast but are arthritic, impotent and blind.

A few months ago, scientists took scorpion poison genes and added them to cabbages. The cabbages kill caterpillars but what about people? New potatoes have been made with insecticide genes built in.

These crops need no spraying, they make their own deadly toxins in the sap. They look and taste identical. Non-bruising tomatoes have been made too.

Genes from any human, animal, insect, vegetable, fruit or microbe can now be swapped easily with genes from other species. Designer life is an every day reality.

You have already eaten gene food - without any labelling - cheese made with rennet from genetically modified bacteria rather than from cow's stomachs.

A UK House of Lords select committee said recently that labelling was unnecessary, and food giants have been very nervous about the idea. Food irradiation was killed stone dead as a process once labelling was compulsory. The same could happen to gene foods.

Now the Co-op has taken the lead, others are sure to follow. No big food retailer will want to risk a boycott. Many people are worried about food safety. How do you prove these new [foods](#) are healthy for humans without long term tests? Who is going to volunteer? What about the effect on pregnant mothers?

Others are worried about animal welfare. New superbreds can be unhealthy, almost designed to suffer. Meat lovers may find it distasteful to think they are eating human genes with their salad or pork chops. A number may also have religious objections.

Consumers have a right to know, but labelling may well lead to an effective ban of some [foods](#) which are safe and uncontroversial.

Who wants supermarket aisles choked up with people reading the labels on every packet of soup, every pizza, every tin, looking for hidden gene products? Far simpler to have a notice at the entrance reassuring customers that only traditional [foods](#) will be sold.

There are vast profits to be made, and a few fortunes waiting to be lost. In the meantime you and I may never look at a bacon sandwich or a tomato salad in quite the same way again.