

GOLDEN RICE

The nonsense concerning Golden Rice to prevent blindness in children

There has been a misleading story peddled by some in the Biotech (gene-tech) industry and also by a few who work at the CSIRO in Australia. These people claim that they intend to genetically engineer a variety of rice called GOLDEN RICE. This Golden Rice is to be sold to poor people in the third world (for which they must pay royalties on patents) and the sellers claim that children will then not suffer blindness because of their deficiency in vitamin A.

This Golden Rice is supposed to contain a gene from daffodils that should produce beta-carotene that the body can use to synthesise vitamin A; but only if there are enough fats or oils present in the body to aid the synthesis of vitamin A. People in the third world where this Golden Rice is to be sold can seldom afford fats or oils in their diets anyway. **The DNA in the Golden Rice is of course patented so royalties must be paid before it is eaten; just what the third world needs.**

The biotech industry has spent \$millions on developing Golden Rice. The cost of stopping blindness due to vitamin A deficiency is about 'U.S 10 cents' per person per year for vitamin A pills! Costing less than \$100,000 per year for all those throughout the world with a vitamin A 'deficiency'. This is well known by the biotech industry; but without GM rice they cannot demand royalties on patents.

It is a pity that some of these genetic engineers and the likes of Monsanto can't be a little more honest about what is behind Golden Rice. I have no problem with technology as such. It is technology that gave us the non-stick frypan and how could we live without that – even if most of us have long since eaten the non-stick Teflon off the non-stick pan.

There is a humble leafy green plant called chicory. Chicory is often of a dark green colour and somewhat like lettuce but much easier to grow and it has a blue flower whereas lettuce has a yellow flower. Chicory leaf probably carries more vitamin A and iron than any other plant. Chicory also contains many other vitamins and minerals.

Our own CSIRO in Australia knows a lot about chicory as they did research on chicory by feeding it to lambs and found that the lambs did amazingly well on chicory – something like doubling their size in half the time than did the control group of lambs; just because of the chicory.

Since that research we have not heard a squeak about that chicory/lamb experiment but a few years back i did hear one scientist from the CSIRO say that the CSIRO intended to genetically engineer sheep so as they would grow larger faster. GM sheep - Whoopee!

Perhaps the problem with chicory is that it is too easy to grow. My guess is that a small garden plot of less than one square metre would produce enough chicory to keep a family supplied with more vitamin A than they would ever need. Meaning that they would have in their diet all the vitamin A they need plus many other vitamins and minerals year in year out. Yes and your body can absorb the nutrients from chicory.

The silence about **chicory** or the cheap **vitamin A** pill option is because they're not high-tech and affordable. Just a small plot of chicory and about 1 to 3 jugs of water per week, depending on the weather, is all you need. A little chicory cooked or raw chopped into meals from time to time would load any person with vitamin A plus iron and other vitamins and minerals; perhaps it's TOO simple.

Another huge problem with chicory is that there are no patents involved for Monsanto or Bayer or Syngenta or Dow et alia, because chicory is not yet Genetically Manipulated (GM) and so no person owns the DNA by law; so there would be no royalties on chicory as there would be on the GM farce called Genetically Manipulated Golden Rice. Oh bother!

Golden Rice is a patented farce – The cost for Vitamin A pills for those who need them is a pittance and chicory is easy to grow, cheap, nutritious and Non-GM!

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