

Golden rice, the miracle crop Greenpeace hates

By George Harrison, Spiked Online, 23 July 2016

Rice is the staple food of over 3.5 billion people, most of whom live in the poorest parts of the world. But the world's staple does come with one major drawback. Despite being loaded with other nutrients, rice is naturally lacking in vitamin A.

The *Lancet* estimates that, every year, around 670,000 children under the age of five die as a result of vitamin-A deficiency. Imagine, then, the development potential of a genetically modified, mass-market strain of rice that is packed with all the typical nutrients you'd expect, but which also comes loaded with vitamin A.

Golden Rice is such a crop, and it's the genetically modified organism (GMO) the South has been waiting for. Unfortunately, certain groups are agitating against Golden Rice over claims it is dangerous – despite it having passed every test and safety check it has ever faced. This resistance is largely thanks to environmental organisations like Greenpeace, who have spent decades campaigning relentlessly against GMOs on the basis of unfounded health concerns. This is despite the fact that GM foodstuffs are commonplace in the US, where the crops are needed far less than they are in the poorest parts of the world. Yet Greenpeace continues to wage war on these revolutionary new foodstuffs, batting away study after study that emerges in defence of GMOs like Golden Rice.

Greenpeace has become so blindly dogmatic in its approach that, late last month, 110 Nobel Laureates signed an [open letter](#) condemning its rejection of GMOs. The signatories, who account for one third of living Nobel laureates, went so far as to suggest that Greenpeace's demonisation of perfectly healthy GMOs, particularly Golden Rice, is akin to a 'crime against humanity'. They estimate that many of the two million annual deaths attributed to vitamin-A deficiency could be prevented by Golden Rice.

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In its response, Greenpeace claimed that its opposition to Golden Rice is down to the failure of manufacturers to produce it cheaply and plentifully. This is a bit rich, considering obstructions by environmentalists has made production of Golden Rice difficult. In 2013, green activists [destroyed trial plots of Golden Rice](#) in the Philippines – setting its development back by years.

Perhaps eco-alarmists genuinely believe, in their own paternalistic way, that they are helping the global poor by restricting their access to these new crops. However, their dogmatic resistance to scientific progress is doing more damage than all the GMOs in the world ever could.

Greenpeace should consider looking at the facts. Throughout the history of their existence, nobody has died as a result of eating GMOs. Countless lives have certainly been lost in that time, however, and many development opportunities have been stifled, thanks to hunger.

It's time organisations like Greenpeace ended their ingrained opposition to Golden Rice and other GM crops. It's time we all embraced the life-changing potential of such crops.

George Harrison is a writer based in London.