



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on August 30, 2012

## Drought and SuperBugs Devastate U.S. Corn Crop

In yet another instance of “unintended consequences,” a recent study has determined that this year’s drought damage to corn crops is even worse because of Bt corn, and failure to rotate crops.

[GreenMedInfo](#), claiming to be the world’s most widely referenced, evidence-based natural medicine resource, posted an August 23 article revealing the result of the findings of farmers and crop and pesticide management experts. The website specializes in posting [abstracts](#) (brief summaries of research articles or in-depth analyses of particular subjects) of scientific findings and academic papers. Dr. Bruce Potter, University of Minnesota professor and farmer Charlie Sandager concluded that the primary corn pest rootworm has developed resistance to the proteins in the GMO (genetically modified organisms) Bt Corn that was designed to kill the pests.



[Bt corn](#) is a type of GMO and the subject of the recent investigation into the rootworm outbreak. One effect of the pest’s presence is that it prevents corn roots from absorbing water, [especially serious given this year’s drought](#). Pest experts suggest that the primary reason for the rootworm-infested crops is that rootworms have become resistant to the Bt protein, resulting in strong and larger rootworm populations.

But not only are corn plants unable to absorb water, the plants become unstable and can easily topple over. Sandager said, “Strong wind came up and it just tipped the corn plants over like a big old tree.”

Indeed, RawStory reported that last fall, the [EPA warned](#) of the problem. Bt corn, engineered a decade ago by Monsanto specifically to ward off the rootworm, is losing its battle. Even the EPA wondered if the company’s monitoring was “inadequate and likely to miss early resistance events.” With this year’s drought, corn crops hardly have a chance.

Crop rotation traditionally took care of the problem. Alternating corn crops with soybeans, which didn’t attract the rootworm, allowed it to die off, but GMO growers have abandoned the practice. GMO seed producers and distributors have suggested to farmers that crop rotation wasn’t necessary since the modifications were supposed to kill the rootworm.

The toll on crops isn’t the only casualty. Pete Riley of [GM Freeze](#) said in a 2011 article that biotech companies are not liable for the failure of the crops, so farmers have no recall when infestations are economically damaging. As they certainly are now in the worst U.S. drought in decades. Riley added, “Strategies to prevent pests becoming resistant are either not being correctly implemented, are failing, or are suffering from a combination of both. The result is more pesticide use rather than less. Throwing



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more GM at the problem may work in the short term, but the history of artificial pest control in agriculture has repeatedly shown the pests will win over the longer term.

“The sooner we switch to agroecological farming techniques, such as avoidance of monocultures, long rotations and the use of natural predators to control pests, the better.”

Organic practices such as natural pest remedies, crop rotation, and proper fertilization make crops more drought- and pest-resistant, and increase yields. Even the United Nations has concluded that organic practices among African farmers could substantially increase the region’s ability to feed Africans.

Resistance to GMO foods in the United States is growing. And so is resistance to corporate cronyism favoring companies such as agri-giant [Monsanto](#). Critics are being given more ammunition to dismantle claims that GMO foods are better, but in the meantime, be prepared for higher corn prices.

*Photo: [Corn field](#) via Shutterstock*



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