



## Corn Hybrids and Big Brother

The marketplace solves so many “problems” that it is amazing how often people turn to government or resort to violence to force their opinions down other people’s throats. Giorgio Fidenato, an Italian agronomist, has been developing six strains of genetically modified corn seeds which he believes are resistant to the corn borer, a pest that annually causes extensive losses to farmers. The European Union has rules which allow Fidenato to plant these particular crops, but the Italian government requires special permission from the Agriculture Ministry.



Fidenato, who cites as his inspiration U.S. Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas), has engaged in what he calls civil disobedience in planting his test crops. The Italian government has simply not created any test which his seeds could pass to be legal. The overlapping authority of the supra-national European Union and the Government of Italy — along with the vague, bureaucratic rules — is a perfect example of a process which the marketplace has been handling for hundreds of years.

The breeding of plants or animals is as old as Egypt. Although this genetic alteration of crops and livestock does not descend into the level of altering the structure of the DNA, man has for a long time been developing strains of plants and animals which serve human needs better than the old stock. In some cases, like mules, the animals do not reproduce. In other cases, the apples, the cattle, the wheat, and the chicken which are selectively bred provide mankind with more variety, more choices, and more food.

The perverse melding of activist environmentalists — who think nothing of trespass and physical destruction in pursuit of their “cause” — and those bureaucrats dependent upon the agitation of rabid environmentalists, creates an environment in which creative exploration of the benefits of more sophisticated genetic development is regarded as somehow dangerous and evil.

No one is really suggesting that the corn which Senor Fidenato intends to grow will poison people or cause a mass catastrophe. Instead, the busybodies assert that the public will be misled by product labeling. Even the European Union acknowledges that there are no real scientific reasons for regulating and excluding genetically modified foods. Still some parts of Europe — France, Austria, and Germany — have declared that they are G.M.O.-free zones (countries with no genetically modified organisms.)

What is even more bizarre is that three-quarters of the corn, soybeans and sugar beets — all very substantial and important food crops — in the United States are already genetically modified. Not even the most doctrinaire environmentalists in America have been able to push politicians into banning these genetically modified crops. (Although a federal judge in San Francisco has enjoined further planting of genetically modified sugar beets until the environmental impact was further studied.)

One concern noted in Italy is that genetically modified plants, like tomatoes, may drive out specialized varieties, which are an important niche market in Europe. No one seems to realize that these very specialized crops which Italian farmers grow now are “genetically modified” through patient labor and



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that if the new tomatoes taste better than the old tomatoes, then the rationale for keeping out the new, better products loses relevance.

Meanwhile, Fidenato may be facing fine and even imprisonment for the Orwellian "crime" of illegal planting. Farming and ranching are among the oldest labors of man. The progressive improvement of the quality and variety of food has been considered a noble undertaking, and the processes used to reach that goal have seldom merited government oversight. Today, however, under the guise of "environmentalism" - a favorite theme of the Nazis - thuggish mobs enter the farmland of other people and destroy their crops while bureaucrats ponder which types of corn can be planted and which cannot.



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