

When Shiva writes that “Golden Rice will make the malnutrition crisis worse” and that it will kill people, she reinforces the worst fears of her largely Western audience. Much of what she says resonates with the many people who feel that profit-seeking corporations hold too much power over the food they eat. There is an argument well worth making. But her statements are rarely supported by data, and her positions often seem more like those of an end-of-days mystic than like those of a scientist.

Genetically modified crops will not solve the problem of the hundreds of millions of people who go to bed hungry every night. It would be far better if the world’s foods contained an adequate supply of vitamins. It would also help the people of many poverty-stricken countries if their governments were less corrupt. Working roads would do more to reduce nutritional deficits than any G.M.O. possibly could, and so would a more equitable distribution of the Earth’s dwindling supply of freshwater. No single crop or approach to farming can possibly feed the world. To prevent billions of people from living in hunger, we will need to use every one of them. ♦

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