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# Biotech Farming



**GLOSSARY**

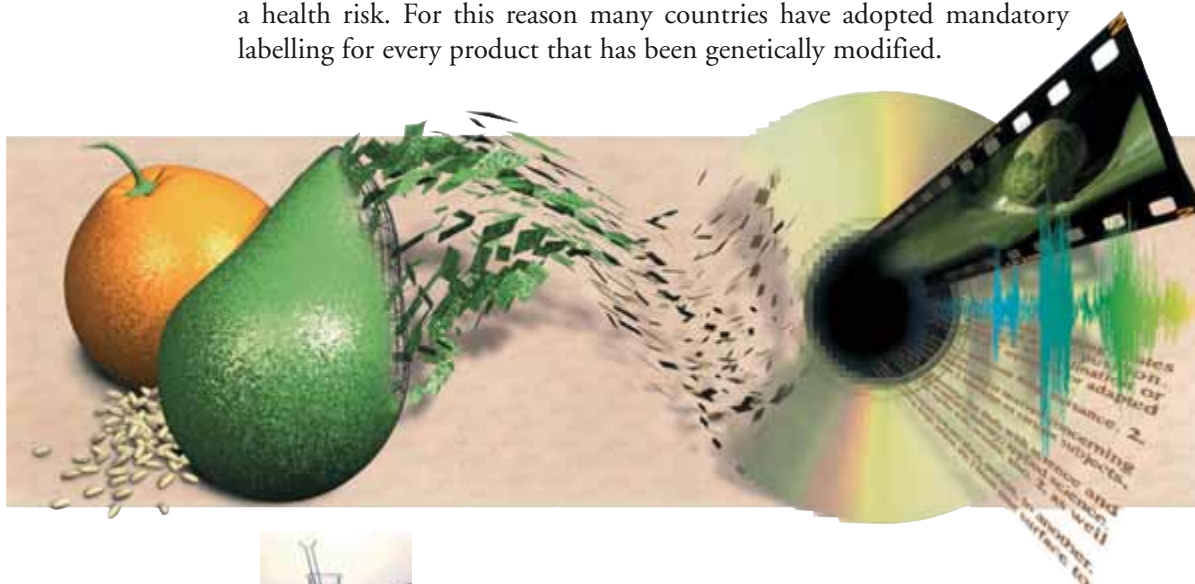
1 to eliminate

**B** iotechnology is any technique which uses living organisms to make products, to improve plants or animals, or to develop microbes for specific uses. This definition includes the traditional methods of plant breeding, animal husbandry and fermentation, but it also covers the methods of modern biotechnology such as the industrial use of recombinant **DNA** (deoxyribonucleic acid), cell fusion and novel bioprocessing techniques.

This type of farming has developed mainly in the last twenty years with the aim to increase agricultural productivity by genetically engineering, transferring or manipulating genes (the units that allow all characteristics to be inherited) in plants, sometimes by adding animal genes.

The information that genes contain can be transferred between different species of animals, plants or bacteria to confer specific benefits. In addition to transferring genes between species, it is also possible to 'switch off'<sup>1</sup> undesirable traits. For example, this technique has been used to switch off the gene for softening in the tomato, giving a product with improved keeping qualities.

The term 'genetically modified' (GM) refers to this alteration of genetic material. GM plants are often created to resist disease and eliminate the need for pesticides. Desired characteristics, such as a higher nutritional value or a faster growth, are chosen to produce a kind of 'super food'. But there are no long-term studies on the effects of modified foods on human health and some experts argue that GM foods are a health risk. For this reason many countries have adopted mandatory labelling for every product that has been genetically modified.



**KEYWORDS**

**DNA** (deoxyribonucleic acid) is a substance that carries genetic information in the cells of the body.