

Corvallis Gazette-Times
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Letter to the Editor:

We need many tools for sustainability

Megan McKenzie's Nov. 15 "As I see it," "Rethink GMOs as sustainable agriculture," suggests keeping an open mind as we seek innovative and creative ways to move toward sustainability.

Don Boucher's follow-up letter ("GMOs 'Sustainable'?", Nov. 16) acknowledges her intellectual challenge, but rejects GMO technology because of moral and ethical concerns about patenting of food crops.

Mr. Boucher asserts that only GMO crops can be patented, and that conventionally bred crops cannot, citing the 1980 Supreme Court decision in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty*.

He is incorrect: many utility patents have been issued for conventionally bred food crops and other plants. Such patents protect against unlawful propagation or sale of patented materials, applying equally to GMO as well as conventionally bred food crops.

Do patents complicate the process of evaluating costs, benefits and ethics of GMO technologies? Yes, just as they do for many other types of technologies.

Patent and plant variety protection laws were implemented to encourage innovation by allowing investors to recoup costs of research and development.

Is the U.S. patent system perfect? I would say not. And yet without such instruments, the pace of innovation would certainly be reduced.

There is no easy solution to sustainability in agriculture, and I'm pretty confident we will need many tools and innovative approaches to achieve it.

With proper safeguards and controls, GMO technology can play a part — if we let it.

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