

Letters, Nov. 21: Reject cliches about GMO technology

In his Nov. 19 letter, “Sustainability often misused buzz word,” Robert Simms dismisses the point of Megan McKenzie’s Nov. 15 “As I see it” that GMO biotechnologies should be considered on their merits, not dismissed as a class. Simms decries them as “corporate farming” and “cell invasion technology.”

How is it that wind farms and computer technologies can be good, although they are strongly corporate-supported, but biotechnology cannot? This makes no sense.

Is not his use of the term “cell invasion technology” exactly the kind of debate-by-slogan that corporations and politicians use routinely to mislead and inflame?

The book that he cited makes the case that hunger is not primarily a problem of technology. Fine. However, it also is clear that farmers in the developing-world desire — and can benefit from — biotechnologies. There now are more developing world farmers growing genetically modified crops than there are agribusiness farmers. This is because there are many of them, and pest-resistant crops tend to have higher yields, lower spoilage and thus make better food and feed.

They also reduce pesticide use — a significant cost and a danger to their own health.

Simms might benefit from a look at a forthcoming book, “Tomorrow’s Table: A Marriage of Genetic Engineering and Organic Farming.” It is written by respected scientist Pamela Ronald and her husband, Raoul Adamchak, who has farmed organic crops for over 20 years. It provides a refreshing and unifying alternative to the unscientific and simplistic cliché that he promotes.

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