

RESEARCH PROJECTS 2016

Project Title

Generically Modified: Effects of Consumer Beliefs about Food Constituents on Health

Principle Investigator(s)

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Abstract

The obesity crisis is growing worldwide, and has a total economic cost of US\$2. trillion. The prevalence and growth rate of obesity is highest in some developing countries, but most research on how people's beliefs influence their food-related decisions is based in the West. We have previously found that many people are misled by corporate messaging to believe that poor diet is not the main cause of obesity, with significant adverse consequences for their BMI. We propose to extend this line of research to people's beliefs related to other industry messaging, specifically, GMOs and organic foods. Preliminary results from a six-nation survey suggest that people who favor both GMOs and organic foods may be healthiest; the effect is strongest in India and does not hold only in South Africa. We propose to investigate these belief systems more thoroughly and understand how they, and their effects, vary across diverse emerging markets.

