



GM crops: the ethics debate

The activist

Jenny Sampson, Environmental activist:

Basically, I just was noticing more and more in the media about GM. And the more I read, the more worried I got really. So I actually got involved in anti GM activism around about February time last year.

Narrator:

This is how it often starts. A GM crop trial is planned at a farm near this village of Long Marsden. Jenny and her fellow activist Mick have come to advise the villagers on how to plan their campaign.

Jenny Sampson:

I'm involved with two groups. One's called 'Outcrop', and one's 'Coventry Friends of the Earth' and through those two groups I've been doing a lot of campaigning, a lot of stalls, sort of raising awareness amongst residents.

Jenny Sampson (talking to group):

We should try and get them all the mailing lists, all the groups that may have an interest in it that may have a mail out, for example Friends of the Earth for example, Genetic Engineering Network...for example, Greenpeace for example....those sort of people

Jenny Sampson:

We've probably distributed about a thousand leaflets, and held an information day with two speakers, lots of organic food and just lots of information and petitions for people to sign, because I think GM is quite a complicated issue. And so a lot of people would have an opinion on it, if they could understand it but they don't know quite enough to make their mind up.

Mick (talking to group):

So you were saying that Mark was interested in coming to a meeting ...

Narrator:

Environmentalists like Mick and Jenny have a very different world view. They reject the idea that people have any special status. Theirs is the bio centric view.

Jenny Sampson:

I think it's a perception that's been held by people from a long long time, that nature is in the service of humanity. And I think a lot of our institutions kind of promote that belief but I completely disagree with it. I really think we should see ourselves as part of the wider eco system. I mean, I even think the word 'environment' is wrong. The word 'environment' refers to something that's outside us, that's nothing to do with us, things that are around us. I think what we need is a word that refers to ourselves as part of the environment. I think that's the way we should be seeing things.

Ruth Chadwick, Bioethicist:

Jenny's biocentricism leads her to take a different view on the way the world is changing as well so, she takes a much wider view for example than thinking about economic globalisation.

Jenny Sampson:

We've always been in the position before when we've been, when we've had to fight for survival, when we've been struggling against the world around us, nature around us. You know, the weather, the cold, the warm, and the lack of food. I suppose now we've reached a

stage when we've actually, we've found a way that we can live very successfully in the short term at least, by damaging stuff around us.