

Americans Want Organic Food: A Surge in GMO-Free Imports

By [Global Research News](#)

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[Chemical Concern](#)

Region: [USA](#)

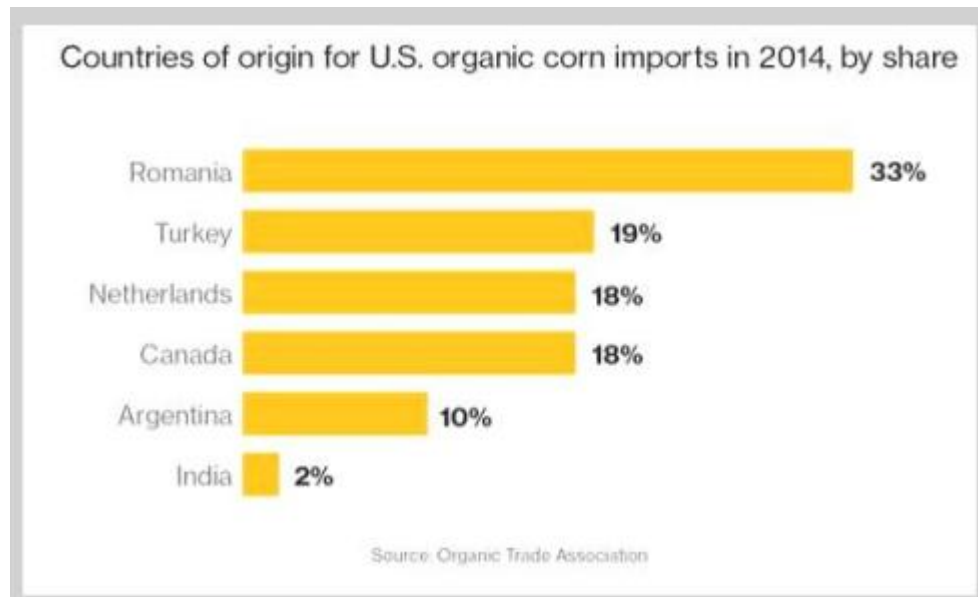
Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

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“Although corn and soybean go primarily into cattle and poultry feed, consumers increasingly want milk and food products to be free of GM ingredients”.

[A Bloomberg report continues:](#)

“A growing demand for organics, and the near-total reliance by U.S. farmers on genetically modified corn and soybeans, is driving a surge in imports from other nations where crops largely are free of bioengineering. Imports such as corn from Romania and soybeans from India are booming, according to an analysis of U.S. trade data released Wednesday by the Organic Trade Association and Pennsylvania State University.



“Sales of foods certified by the U.S. as free of synthetic chemicals or genetic engineering reached [\\$35.9 billion](#) in 2014, an 11% increase over 2013 and about 5.1% of U.S. grocery spending. The organic sector’s average annual growth of about 10% is triple that of overall food sales, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture and trade association data.

“According to trade data compiled by the US Organic Trade Association and the Pennsylvania State University, the rising demand for organic foods has pushed up the import bill for corn and soybean, the two most important GM crops being cultivated in America. Although corn and soybean go primarily into cattle and poultry feed, consumers are increasingly wanting milk and food

products to be free of GM ingredients”.

Straws in the wind?

[The New York Times](#) also reported in January that Monsanto’s earnings fell 34% in the first fiscal quarter as South American farmers cut back on planting corn, reducing demand for the company’s biotech-enhanced seeds. The company said its business was also affected by reduced cotton planting in Australia and a shift in timing for its chemical business.



Analyst [Devinder Sharma](#) notes that: “US imports of organic soybean from India has more than doubled to \$73.8 million in 2014. He called on the two pro-GM scientists to debate independent scientific findings as opposed to focussing only on industry funded research. His views were supported by two other spokesmen, one from Maharashtra, [where open field crop trials of brinjal, maize, rice, chickpea and cotton are taking place](#) and another from India’s Greenpeace: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIW7fD1wb7s>

As US imports more organic foods on consumer preference, Indian biotech companies are ‘pushing for GM crops’

[Sharma reports](#) that public opinion as seen in grocery sales data indicates a gradual shifting to foods grown without the use of chemicals and GM. However, in India, four State Governments - Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Punjab - have allowed field trials of GM crops. He sees pressure mounting on other State Governments to fall in line. The biotech industry led by the Association of Biotech Led Enterprises (ABLE) has reportedly written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to expedite the regulatory process for clearing the field trials.

Competing lobbies: the biotech industry v Soybean Processor Association



Resistance from the Soybean Processor Association of India (SOPA) led former Agriculture Minister Ajit Singh to oppose research trials of GM soybean. The industry claimed that importers preference for Indian soymeal would be lost once contamination from GM crops becomes obvious. India is at present the biggest exporter of rice; Sharma comments that allowing GM rice field trials, even if excluded from areas such as Orissa where it is believed to have originated, would risk contamination. He emphasises that utmost caution should be exercised before the country is opened up for field trials of GM crops which:

- have, in most cases, led to the doubling in the application of chemical herbicides like glyphosate; use has increased to over 283.5 million pounds in 2012;
- have led to the emergence of superweeds in some 60 million acres of crop land
- and, to date, have shown no increase in crop productivity.

Sharma notes that the annual increase in sales of foods free of synthetic chemicals and GM ingredients in the US indicate a rising preference for organically produced foods and that in the White House Michelle Obama grows only organic food in the sprawling gardens and is known to serve organic food to guests, ending:

The consumer preference for GM-free foods in the US is growing rapidly. We hope that this commercial imperative will eventually lead to the winding down of the industry's drive to grow GM crops.

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