



Central European
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Pfizer and rennets

Coffee Beans

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On 4 March 2024, Mercola.com (credibility rating 37.5/100) published a text claiming that "... more than 90% of cheese sold in the US contains a dangerous genetically modified organism (GMO) rennet produced by the pharmaceutical company Pfizer". The communication went on to confide to readers with substantial concerns about possible toxic effects, as well as allergic reactions or digestive problems for consumers. In a similar vein, British businessman and former parliamentary candidate Jim Ferguson expressed himself on the aforementioned platform. Three days after the first report on the subject, i.e. on 7 March, he published the following post: 'Mmmmm Pfizer, yummy cheese. ... If you're in the United States, you might want to check what cheese you're buying. If it's Pfizer, I'd throw it in the trash.' Mr. Ferguson's post on the subject was followed by more than 198,000 readers (1).

It is impossible to make cheese without rennet. These are the enzymes that allow the milk protein to be converted/precipitated into a solid form called whey, the base of cheeses and other dairy products. This process has been known and used since ancient times. In antiquity, for example, milk thistle, fig tree bark, mulberry or nettle bark were used for this purpose. Animal rennets are also known, and in the past were mainly obtained from the lining of ruminant stomachs. Another possibility is rennet made from moulds, fungi or yeasts, so-called microbial rennets. In the last three decades or so (no new development), rennets/enzymes prepared by biotechnology from genetically modified micro-organisms have been used worldwide for the production of cheese and many other dairy products.

There is no direct evidence of health problems in humans related to the consumption of cheese with genetically modified enzymes. The risks of GMOs are being assessed through research. The safety assessment focuses on direct health effects (toxicity), the potential to cause an allergic reaction and possible nutritional effects associated with the genetic modification.

The World Health Organisation and the European Food Safety Authority have stated that GM foods pose no greater risks to human health than conventional foods, provided they are properly tested. Similarly, the US National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) regularly publishes a review of scientific studies on genetically modified foods and human health, concluding that there is no evidence of adverse health effects from eating genetically modified foods (2, 3).

References:

1. NewsGuard's Reality Check newsguardtech@substack.com
2. [M E Johnson](#) , [J A Lucey](#). Major technological advances and trends in cheese. J Dairy Sci. 2006;89(4):1174-8.
3. Rogelj I, Perko B, Francky A, Penca V, Pungercar J. [Recombinant lamb chymosin as an alternative coagulating enzyme in cheese production](#). J Dairy Sci. 2001;84(5):1020-6.