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Item Type	Preprint
Authors	The Holy See
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Download date	2026-11-13 16:43:13
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/221445

Vatican endorses gene-altered food

VATICAN CITY, Vatican City, Aug. 4 (UPI) -- The Vatican has stunned opponents of genetically modified foods by declaring them a blessing, the Times of London said Monday.

Until the statement, the Vatican had been neutral in the confrontation between the European Union and the United States over genetically modified food.

Archbishop Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said the Vatican was preparing an official report on biotechnology, to be published next month, which would come out in favor of genetic modification.

Archbishop Martino said the Pope was greatly interested in new technologies for food development as part of a policy of sustainable agriculture. He noted 24,000 people die every day from starvation.

Archbishop Martino, who until last year was the Vatican representative at the United Nations, said he lived for 16 years in the United States "and I ate everything that was offered to me, including genetically modified products. They had no effect on my health. This controversy is more political than scientific."