

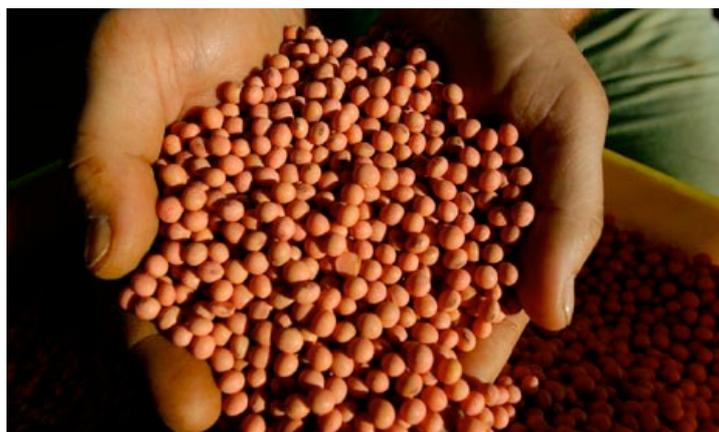
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GM lobby helped draw up crucial report on Britain's food supplies

Email trail shows how biotech group helped watchdog to draw up analysis of GM crops ... and prompted two advisers to quit

Jamie Doward

The Observer, Sunday 6 June 2010



Genetically modified soybeans seeds at a farm in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. Photograph: Alexandre Meneghini/AP

A powerful lobbying organisation representing agribusiness interests helped draft a key government report that has been attacked by environmentalists for heavily favouring the arguments of the genetically modified food industry.

The revelation comes after the resignation of two government advisers who have criticised the close relationship between the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the body that oversees the UK's food industry, and the GM lobby.

Emails between the FSA and the Agricultural Biotechnology Council (ABC) show the council inserted key sentences strengthening the case for GM food that ended up in the final report.

The report, "Food Standards Agency work on changes in the market and the GM regulatory system", examines how GM products are entering the UK, where the growing of GM products is banned, through the animal feed system. It acknowledges food prices could go up if GM products continue to be excluded.

Emails from the council – which represents leading GM food companies such as Monsanto and Bayer – to Dr Clair Baynton, the then head of novel foods at the FSA, show a close dialogue between both sides between 2008 and August 2009, when the report was published.

On 19 November 2008, Baynton sent the council a draft of the report, saying: "I am happy to discuss... if that would be helpful."

In response, the council suggested a series of changes that emphasised how GM food was playing an increasingly important role in global agriculture and helping bring

down food prices. Some of the amendments were rejected by the FSA, but others were accepted.

One accepted alteration acknowledged the GM lobby's argument that GM food is inevitable in the European Union because of its ubiquity elsewhere. It stated that "retailers were concerned they may not be able to maintain their current non-GM sources of supply as producers increasingly adopt GM technology around the world".

And the FSA also accepted the suggested amendment that soya protein (which can be grown as a GM crop) remains "the most cost-effective method of supplementing animal feed at present". Baynton replied a few days later: "Many thanks for your comments on the draft report", and asked the council for help in finding evidence of the prevalence of GM foods, "either authorised or being considered for authorisation in Argentina, Brazil and the US".

Months later, the council sent Baynton, a former employee of GM food producer Syngenta, a list of whom it wanted on a steering group overseeing a "public engagement exercise" on GM food. The email stated: "We believe GM must be presented as an option within the wider context of food security as part of a solution to feeding a growing population."

The FSA was due to start the public engagement exercise, which is expected to cost the taxpayer £500,000, this month. But the move is being seen in some quarters as a "rigged" exercise.

Two members who sit on the FSA's steering group have resigned in protest. Dr Helen Wallace, director of Genewatch UK, a scientific pressure group opposed to GM, stepped down last month. Last week, the group's vice-chairman, Professor Brian Wynne, an expert on public engagement with science, resigned, complaining that the FSA had adopted a "dogmatically entrenched", pro-GM attitude.

Wallace said the emails "expose how the Food Standards Agency is acting as a puppet of the GM industry, by colluding with foreign GM companies to undermine people's access to GM-free food supplies in Britain". The FSA is chaired by former Labour minister Lord Rooker, a GM enthusiast, who has attacked its critics as "anti-science".

A confidential bid document to win the contract to run the engagement exercise, submitted by the polling company Ipsos MORI, acknowledges the sensitivity of the initiative. "There will be no active seeking of media interest in relation to this project," it explains.

The bidding document states that it works on behalf of a "multinational agro-chemical and seed company" and warns: "Campaign organisations who may feel that the 'battle' was won in 2003 could decide to try and hijack the process to ensure GM food does not get a chance to be reintroduced into the UK."

An FSA spokesman defended its decision to include the GM lobby's suggested changes in the final report.

"In order to obtain an accurate picture of the situation, the FSA held a series of meetings with stakeholders before drafting this report," the spokesman said. "As the report was concerned with the markets for food and animal feed, the biotech industry had not been involved in these meetings. However, in order to ensure the report was balanced and not to exclude this relevant stakeholder group, the view of the ABC was also sought. Their comments were taken on board in the final draft, as were the comments by other stakeholders."

But Wallace was critical of the decision. "The stakeholder meeting was transparent –

the changes made behind the scenes at the industry's request were not," she said. "The report fails to represent the vast majority of GM-free farmers, who will have to pay a heavy price if their crops or seed are allowed to become contaminated with GM crops or seed."

The row came as the environment secretary, Caroline Spelman, who used to work as director of a biotech lobbying firm, said that she was in favour of GM foods "in the right circumstances".

BRIEF HISTORY OF GM

People have been breeding animals and new varieties of plants for centuries. As a result, the world's main food crops have been selected, crossed and bred to suit local conditions and to make them tastier.

Whereas traditional methods involve mixing thousands of genes, genetic modification allows just one or a small number of genes to be inserted into a plant to change it in a predetermined way. Genes can be "switched" on or off to change how it develops.

The first commercially grown genetically modified whole food crop was a type of tomato, which was modified to ripen without softening and was approved for release in the US in 1994.

Most GM crops are grown in North America. The Grocery Manufacturers of America association estimates that 75% of all processed foods in the US contain a GM ingredient. In the EU, if a food contains or consists of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), this must be indicated.

Public opposition to GM food within the EU saw one of its main proponents, Monsanto, pull out of the European seed cereal business in 2003.

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darthbandon

6 Jun 2010, 12:42AM

Surprise surprise. Big business rules once again.

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[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**Chewtoy**

6 Jun 2010, 12:55AM

The government regulators need to be regulated.

[Recommend?](#) (89)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**name1**

6 Jun 2010, 1:00AM

If someone blindfolded you and told you to eat something which has unknown effects on your body and health, would you do it? No. That is why GM is unpopular in this country, and no amount of propaganda will change my mind.

[Recommend?](#) (153)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**name1**

6 Jun 2010, 1:06AM

Not only that, if GM was widespread then the cross contamination would mean that we would not be able to choose non-GM food even if we wanted to. As GM crops would be engineered to self-terminate after 1 or 2 harvests, this means we would rely on big business for our food supplies. We would be at their mercy. Considering that profit is the over-riding objective of most of the big businesses such as Monsanto, would this be a good thing or rather risky? We would want to be at the mercy of an unethical multinational? We are not talking luxuries, we are talking FOOD.

[Recommend?](#) (141)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**WeAreSoFucked**

6 Jun 2010, 1:12AM

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6262083407501596844#>

film about Monsanto and GMOs.

Quite frightening, as well as infuriating.

[Recommend?](#) (56)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**FundusVentriculi**

6 Jun 2010, 1:20AM

@name1 and all the other dooms-dayers .. The only thing that GM crops have been

proven to do is: Grow better food, faster, cheaper and healthier.

With the added benefit of taking up a lot less farm space, leaving more for wildlife

It really irritates me when people think they have a *valid* opinion, which is based on nothing but pure conjecture and 'what if' scenarios.

Food for the new generation should be

- a) healthier
- b) grown faster
- c) use less land
- d) better quality & quantity
- e) leave less carbon footprint

GM can really satisfy all of this..

The next time you think organic is the healthy/eco friendly way to go.. think again!

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FundusVentriculi

6 Jun 2010, 1:37AM

@wearesofucked, I think you are infuriating, posting a 1.45 hr video....

jesus!

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Jimimidge

6 Jun 2010, 1:38AM

"Whereas traditional methods involve mixing thousands of genes, genetic modification allows just one or a small number of genes to be inserted into a plant to change it in a predetermined way. Genes can be "switched" on or off to change how it develops."

This is hardly a proper description of genetic modification. It makes out that GM is similar to natural (or deliberate) cross-fertilisation. It is not.

Profit is the main aim for GM foods. Profit is the reason for poor dietary habits. Profit is the reason for landfill sites full of unnecessary packaging. Profit is the reason etc. etc. ad nauseum.

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thinkarete

6 Jun 2010, 2:02AM

I APPLAUD you for printing this feature - the world media appears to constantly attack anything that may prove uncomfortable for Big Pharm & with millions being spent by their lobbyists - I fear they will use their power to bring in legislation that will effect us all. They talk about food security & how GM will save us all but unless you do your own research you won't find out about the multitude of GM horror stories such as the myriad of Indian farmers who have committed suicide after planting Monsanto

seeds - which failed. I am not a food scientist but have read that some GM cereals contains prions (misformed proteins linked to Mad Cow Disease) if millions of cattles are being fed these products in the USA, instead of being put to pasture, are we looking down the barrel of a gun when we eat US beef? Also I am v keen to find out about the CODEX being pushed by the US GM gang which will make it illegal for countries to label foods " not containing GM products" as this will affect their ability to export products containing GM ingredients. Anyone know more about this?? I am a health sciences degree student & am really sick of reading one -sided media reports which play straight into the hands of the corporates. Every time I read a report on how herbal medicine etc is dangerous - I want to ask why no one reports that iatrogenic disease (caused by medical intervention/drug reaction/hospital error) is the 5th biggest killer in the US. Don't even start me when it comes to how we are letting our kids drink/eat a myriad of products laced with sweeteners... (aspartamine - animal research showed many animals developed brain tumours but this science was hidden/ignored by FDA -v interesting reading!) Please - continue this argument - the UK populus needs to be educated not bamboozled by biotech PR.

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BlueRock

6 Jun 2010, 2:07AM

This is nothing new. The GMO corporations have been manipulating US agriculture policies for a long time: [Musical Chairs, The Food and Drug Administration Subject to Influence](#).

It doesn't even start there - they [restrict and control testing on their products](#).

And, with a GMO shill freshly installed as the environment secretary, it looks like the mantra for the next few years could be 'grab your ankles and grin' for those of us who recognise how undesirable, unnecessary and harmful GMO agriculture is.

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773440

6 Jun 2010, 2:29AM

Dumb article. It entirely fails to mention, nevermind intelligently represent, the major objection to GM crops.

Yes, there are possibilities of contamination, unknown effects on the ecosystem, negative impact on biodiversity, encouragement of the use of strong pesticides etc. But these are quantifiable issues that might, in an ideal world, be transparently addressed and either proven to be impassably problematic or perhaps even verifiably overcome in the future.

The major, massive and unanswered objection to GM food production is that it creates sterile seeds whose use is controlled, whose very genome is patented, by profit-centred multinational corporations - who also produce the pesticides that go along with them. Specifically, it hands the corporations in question a monopoly over the production of particular staple crops, a situation that no sane economist or politician should countenance for a single second.

In a single generation, we could transfer control of our agriculture to corporate

agribusiness interests. In the worst case, we could entirely lose the infrastructure, growing conditions and seedstock necessary to even recover the genuine ownership and control of what's left of our own food production in the event of an economic or political disagreement.

Unless this side of the biotech industry is addressed and regulated in the public interest by strong international treaties and effective, transparent national laws, then allowing GM crops is simply a surrender of any control over agricultural food production (this applies to feed crops for livestock too, of course) from governments, farmers and the public to the mechanics of corporate profit.

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rightfromwrong

6 Jun 2010, 3:09AM

The Gene manipulation of food is the WRONG.

As (name1) above has highlighted they can manipulate the genes of seeds to not seed and grow after 1 OR 2 years of crops this is against nature MONOSANTO and there COHORTS already do this in some countries in Africa and are trying to introduce gene manipulation seeds in India, but are facing strong opposition

This tactic eventually puts the growers under their control as the growers will have no option, but to buy their seed from the likes of MONOSANTO, and then they will inflate their seed prices.

If this became common practice world wide you would really see food shortages on a global scale.

There is a major move at present by Monsanto and their cohorts using all kinds of political lobbying and influencing of agriculture policy in the United States of America especially against the small and medium size growers. As some large crop growers already use them.

In the United States of America farm animals have more growth hormones and antibiotics pumped into them before they go to slaughter than most other countries of the world put together that is why obesity is such a problem there.

GENE MANIPULATED food for animals as well as humans (remember the food chain) is more about the control of people's minds and biological systems than an answer to any food shortages.

THERE IS ENOUGH FOOD IN THE WORLD TO FEED THE POPULATION TEN TIMES OVER IT IS THE MANIPULATION OF THE PRICES OF FOOD AND THE HOLDING BACK OF SUPPLIES TO CREATE SHORTAGES TO INCREASE PROFITS THATS THE PROBLEM.

PEOPLE MUST REMEMBER, THERE HAVE BEEN SO CALLED SHORTAGE OF POTATOES DUE TO DRY WEATHER OR TO WET WEATHER WHEN THEY GROW POTATOES IN ISRAEL AND EGYPT WHERE ITS DRY MOST OF YEAR AND IN IRELAND WHERE IT IS VERY WET AND THEY GROW LARGE QUANTITIES OF POTATOES.

THESE ARE MANUFACTURED SHORTAGES THE PRICES THEN GO UP AND THEY NEVER COME DOWN AGAIN ITS THE SAME WITH WHEAT THERE WAS A SUPPOSED BAD HARVEST A FEW YEARS AGO AND BREAD INCREASED IN PRICE BY 20 TO 30 PERCENT IT HAS NEVER COME DOWN AGAIN. ALTHOUGH WHEAT PRICES FELL BY 50 PERCENT IN THE FOLLOWING TWO YEARS. THIS IS GOING ON WITH DIFFERENT BASIC CROPS EVERY FEW YEARS.

THE MANUFACTURE OF SHORAGES TO INCREASE PROFITS AND MAKE PEOPLE

THINK FOOD IS DIFFICULT TO GROW IT IS NOT

As for countries such as Sudan, Etheopia and many more so called poor nations it is the corruption of there goverments and individuals in those goverments that cause the food problems by the rich and powerfull LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE LARGE FINANCIAL ORGANISATIONS THE WORLD BANK THE INTERNATIONAL MONETERY FUND THE BANK OF INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTand all the major Banks.

They want to control people more and more REMEBER YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT OR IN SOME CASES WHAT YOU DO NOT EAT wake up before its to late demand NON GENETICLY MANIPULATED FOOD.

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Soulman89

6 Jun 2010, 3:38AM

@thinkarete

I think the 'world media' should attack those who propagate the uninformed rubbish against GM. GM is by no means perfect but it is an option, with many of the 'dangers' portrayed being absolute rubbish.

The trials in India failed initially because the wrong cotton strain was modified - the same result would have occurred if a cotton plant from Kazakhstan was used in India. Following corrections yields have increased beyond the standard level.

You claim you are a health sciences student, yet you clearly don't understand key scientific concepts. Herbal remedies are dangerous because they are not if at all as effective as medicine. You must be reading some odd papers if you think prions have been found in GM crops. Prions have only been found in animals, as they are misfolded animal proteins. There would be no point in putting these proteins within a plant. It would increase the fitness cost to the plant and not benefit it at all.

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redlegs22

6 Jun 2010, 3:53AM

@ Soulman89 - how do you know that "many of the dangers portrayed being absolute rubbish" - we are talking food not cotton.....we dont eat cotton, often.

You talk total b/s - you clearly know nothing about herbal medicine if you say that they are "dangerous because they are not as effective as medicine" - WHAT !! the differences are that, used correctly, they do not produce side effects as lethal as allopathic medicines.

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rayscraggs

6 Jun 2010, 4:52AM

.....I wonder how many people who wrote some of the more emotional comments actually know what a gene is? I just wonder if these people did a degree in biology they would still think in the same way as they do??

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[ozzydave](#)

6 Jun 2010, 4:54AM

FundusVentriculi

6 Jun 2010, 1:37AM

@wearesofucked, I think you are infuriating, posting a 1.45 hr video....

jesus!

quite right, who has 1.45 hours to spend educating themselves on the future of human food? Only an "anti science" (how pathetic that phrase is) infuriationist, shurely?

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[ozzydave](#)

6 Jun 2010, 5:00AM

rayscraggs

6 Jun 2010, 4:52AM

.....I wonder how many people who wrote some of the more emotional comments actually know what a gene is? I just wonder if these people did a degree in biology they would still think in the same way as they do??

i wonder how may MNC's actually know what a conscience/community/person is? i just wonder if these sociopaths spent 5 minutes thinking of *anything* but their own enormous bank balance they would still think in the same way that they do??

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[wombat26](#)

6 Jun 2010, 5:31AM

@FundusVentriculi:

"The only thing that GM crops have been proven to do is: Grow better food, faster, cheaper and healthier.

With the added benefit of taking up a lot less farm space, leaving more for wildlife" do you have a link to a peer reviewed study to back this up?

my understanding was that GM crops were designed to be a monoculture, ie where you can spray the crop with particular weedkillers that they are resistant to. I'm unsure how this helps wildlife. Surely a diverse mix of plants is better for a wider range of wildlife?

I did chemistry at uni, and am not antiscience, but I'm sceptical of the benefit to humanity of crops which tie farmers into buying a particular brand of weedkiller

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[harrakaharraka](#)

6 Jun 2010, 6:40AM

BONKERS

saying you are in support of GM crops is like saying you are in favour of the things people do.

its just not that simple.

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[harrakaharraka](#)

6 Jun 2010, 6:43AM

[rightfromwrong](#)

makes an excellent point too. there is no shortage of food in the world. worth saying again.

just for example next time you walk down the high street have a good look at that mcdonalds stuffed pigeon that can barely take off.

then remember all the stuff that was rotting in your fridge that you binned this week.

sick society.

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[jefferd](#)

6 Jun 2010, 7:05AM

So two anti-GM agitators resign because evidence is used from pro-GM agitators. How mature.

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[Firstact](#)

6 Jun 2010, 7:07AM

773440

6 Jun 2010, 2:29AM

Dumb article. It _entirely_ fails to mention, nevermind intelligently represent, the major objection to GM crops.

Yes, there are possibilities of contamination, unknown effects on the ecosystem, negative impact on biodiversity, encouragement of the use of strong pesticides etc. But these are quantifiable issues that might, in an ideal world, be transparently addressed and either proven to be impassably problematic or perhaps even verifiably overcome in the future.

The major, massive and unanswered objection to GM food production is that it creates sterile seeds whose use is controlled, whose very genome is patented, by profit-centred multinational corporations - who also produce the pesticides that go along with them. Specifically, it hands the corporations in question a monopoly over the production of particular staple crops, a situation that no sane economist or politician should countenance for a single second.

In a single generation, we could transfer control of our agriculture to corporate agribusiness interests. In the worst case, we could entirely lose the infrastructure, growing conditions and seedstock necessary to even recover the genuine ownership and control of what's left of our own food production in the event of an economic or political disagreement.

Unless this side of the biotech industry is addressed and regulated in the public interest by strong international treaties and effective, transparent national laws, then allowing GM crops is simply a surrender of any control over agricultural food production (this applies to feed crops for livestock too, of course) from governments, farmers and the public to the mechanics of corporate profit.

A really good post. I agree entirely.

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Fioanu

6 Jun 2010, 7:24AM

@FundusVentriculi:

Did you watch the video. I did. The whole lot of it and guess what it makes me sick to read ignorance like yours. Watch the video and see Monsanto as the Frankenstein t really is.

GM is really a disease

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rainbowjoy

6 Jun 2010, 8:23AM

I hate GM because it is yet another interference with nature we can't see the consequences of, having said that there was a very good report that came out of North America called 'Seeds of Doubt' which can be read on the Soil Association site. The GM companies tried to suppress it but if the truth needs telling these facts get into mainstream society.

Also the fact that it takes away our choice to choose healthy unadulterated food and this is Organics.

The old chestnut that GM will help with third world starvation is another Myth, if they want these people to survive why do they produce a seed that doesn't allow them to collect thier own seed to keep the number of crops going, these crops only produce void seeds thus the people who need the food the most will have to buy more expensive seed along with the weed killers and fertilisers they will need to keep thier crops healthy or so they say. Making it more and more unavailable to these poor countries who end up in deeper and deeper debt. The truth is that they don't give a damn about helping the starving or increasing crop yield it is all to do with the

shareholders getting bigger and bigger bucks in thier pockets at our expense and probably health too.

We do not want or need GM crops or food in this country or elsewhere in the world North America is already in trouble with dust bowls of land that they cannot grow anymore crops in.

So become aware of the lie that is GM and stop burying heads in the sand or should I say dust bowls.

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bailliegillies

6 Jun 2010, 8:24AM

@FundusVentriculi

@name1 and all the other dooms-dayers .. The only thing that GM crops have been proven to do is: Grow better food, faster, cheaper and healthier.

And you obviously haven't got the point either. This isn't about the crops but the methods being used by their makers to impose their products on the people of this country against their will.

IF their products are safe why can't they not put them on the open market like any other grower and leave it up to the buyer whether or not they want to eat their food, rather than bribing government officials who are supposed to act in our interests and not that of big business.

Or are you an advocate of Free Market policy where the market is free to bribe governments to accept their products, even though they may carry unknown dangers for the public.

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jonathandgones

6 Jun 2010, 8:25AM

Returning to the Jamie Doward's article, I suggest readers look at the fsa report at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodmattergmreport.pdf, and then ask themselves, would it have been useful to prepare such a report without consulting with all stakeholders, including the seed industry? I think not.

A word to 773440; these so-called sterile or Terminator seeds are an urban myth. They were never created. A patent was filed on a method that might work to achieve "genetic use restriction" in this way, but it never worked.

If you're worried about monopoly in the seeds business, reduce the regulatory burden. That way there could be more players and competition; right now only the big companies can afford the regulatory costs.

I've been making GM plants for 27 years. GM is one tool in the toolbox that could help us produce enough food with less land, less water, less energy and less agrichemicals (see <http://royalsociety.org/Reapingthebenefits/>). For GM plants, you take a plant that already carries 30,000 or more genes, and add a gene or two that confers useful properties. At the end of the day, a GM potato or soybean is still just a potato or soybean, with an extra gene or two. I'm very sympathetic to concerns about control of the seed industry, but the technology is safe and extremely tightly regulated.

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JedFanshaw

6 Jun 2010, 8:34AM

Oh dear!

The FSA consults with industry over GM crops and the witch-burners emerge from the woodwork to castigate them - quelle surprise! The analogy is correct in that many of the posters clearly hold anti-GM religious beliefs.

GM isn't perfect, but then again what is in this world?

The GM companies initially made products that produced fertile seeds. The anti-GM fascists screamed that they would cross-contaminate natural products. The GM companies then produced sterile products, and guess what? - the anti-GM folks scream about the poor farmers having to buy seed every year - you can't have it both ways folks.

Unlike conventional plant breeding GM techniques provide a route to the insertion of one, or more, specific genes into a genome - unlike the shotgun approach that is conventional cross-breeding. To give an example of the problems of conventional cross-breeding: European vines are not immune to certain fungal pests, whereas the North American vine is - simple solution is to cross-breed them - the problem that arose was that along with the gene for fungal resistance you also got a gene that produced the offensive aroma/taste components present in fruit from North American vines.

GM has been used to produce rice with extra pro-vitamin A and some useful pharmaceuticals (sorry, the anti-GM lobby all use homeopathic remedies, so they'd object to this).

Time to grow up kiddies, learn some science and accept that this is the 21st century and not the 12th.

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frog2

6 Jun 2010, 8:42AM

The film that **WeArereSoFucked - 1:12AM** links to is

Le monde selon Monsanto (**The World According to Monsanto**)

made by Marie-Monique Robin- a quick wiki-

In March 2008, her documentary about the Monsanto Company (English title, The World According to Monsanto) was aired on the Arte network in France and Germany.

[14] It was a co-production between Arte and the National Film Board of

Canada.[15][16] The movie tells the story of the St. Louis firm: located in 46 countries, Monsanto has become the world leader in GMO (more than 90% of the market share), the firm also produces PCBs (pyralene), herbicides (such as the Agent Orange during the Vietnam war), and the bovine artificial growth hormones, used for milk production, prohibited in Europe. The documentary explains that since its creation in 1901 the firm accumulated lawsuits for poisoning and polluting, while presenting itself today as a company of "life sciences", converted to the virtues of sustainable development. **In her investigation the journalist discovers that to impose its GMOs on the**

world, Monsanto first infiltrated the sciences and regulatory spheres [17].

Translated into 15 languages, the movie and book are a huge hit internationally. In France the documentary was released when the debate about GMOs divided the political class and the researchers while the majority of the population was opposed to their use. This film obtained the following prizes: the Rachel Carson Prize (Norway), the Umwelt-Medienpreis prize (Germany), the Ekofilm Festival of Cesky Kumlov (Czech Republic, 2009).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Monique_Robin

I saw it on Arte TV , when it was first shown, very powerful. Very grim.

Just remember, this is not a debate of pro-science and anti-science. That is how the propagandists of the Industry love to present it , because it gets on their 'side' a number of people who are completely clueless about political and economic lobbying. One might call them useful idiots ... sometimes very high-powered on science, but total innocents in our real world of money and power. Other people 'convince' themselves with venality thrown in.

One local French Senator has 'belonged' to Monsanto since propagandising over twenty years ago for the attempt to force beef hormones on the European market. Another, from the same right-wing UMP governing party has virtually accused him of corrupt lobbying in the Senate . There was uproar and indignation, but he did not name the name, tho everyone knows who.

Hell, members of his own family are convinced too . They know.

PS There are short video clips all over the place. 9 minutes here -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hErvV5YEHkE>

http://www.nfb.ca/film/world_according_Monsanto_6

PPS apologies for not giving clickable links, but probs with my Active-X, and nothing worse than a link that looks good ,and thenfails.

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[burtonleo](#)

6 Jun 2010, 8:45AM

if you haven't read the posting by 77340, please go back and read it

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[johnnyboyace](#)

6 Jun 2010, 8:46AM

I believe GM crops are a bad idea. I accept the concept of growing GM crops to help support 3rd world countries, but by resorting to this, humankind is overlooking more fundamental problems, we are just papering over cracks for profit. In 1984 famine hit Africa , Live Aid was a great thing, but almost 30 years later its the same problem ! I don't believe for one minute actually eating GM food is harmful, what is the real problem is cross contamination ! NOBODY has control over this, no one ! there is no certainty it wont happen and this is the problem. Making crops resistant to certain fungi, pests etc is meddling with nature. These pests are part of the food chain, which we are changing. All seems great at first, BIO companies then make lots of money !!!! Money Money money !!!!!!! How we can we entertain the thought of changing such a

precious resource. Once its screwed we are at the mercy of mother nature, No one knows the hidden dangers or outcomes in say, 20 years time, when its too late. We as a race deserve to mess things up, its in our biological nature to destruct. Raping the earth of all its raw resources, population growth, out of control, water per head in decline. People are too quick to only see 10, 20 years into the future, why not 50 years, 80 years, 200 years !

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awyrpoeth

6 Jun 2010, 8:46AM

The context of GM doesn't go unchallenged enough. It depends on a vast monocultural farming system which in itself degrades the environment. When, generally pro Gm, people say the argument should be science based, it never goes beyond the narrow question of food safety.

The problem of world hunger is one of distribution, not production, so it is disingenious of GM advocates to promote this technology as some kind of solution.

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JedFanshaw

6 Jun 2010, 8:47AM

rainbowjoy

Also the fact that it takes away our choice to choose healthy unadulterated food and this is Organics.

That's where you'd be very wrong!

Organic agriculture is another of those modern fables for folks with too much money and not enough knowledge

May I point you in the direction of Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control (downloadable from the EC website). There, on pages 36 and 37, you will find details of some of the wonderful chemicals approved for use by organic farmers, including: Copper in the form of copper hydroxide, copper oxychloride, (tribasic) copper sulphate, cuprous oxide, copper octanoate (metal that persists and accumulates in the soil and poisons useful organisms, can be carcinogenic to the user) for use as a fungicide, Lime sulphur (calcium polysulphide, strongly alkaline solution, corrosive, will release toxic hydrogen sulfide if acidified) for use as a fungicide, and Mineral oils (Insecticide, fungicide).

Organic farming is just a subtle form of masochism

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**frog2**

6 Jun 2010, 8:51AM

Worked automatically this time I see , links good then !

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**bailliegillies**

6 Jun 2010, 8:52AM

@jonathandgjones

Returning to the Jamie Doward's article, I suggest readers look at the fsa report at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodmattergmreport.pdf, and then ask themselves, would it have been useful to prepare such a report without consulting with all stakeholders, including the seed industry? I think not.

There is a world of difference between consulting and giving free access to the end report and editing it in the company's favour.

By all means consult, that is what they are supposed to do, what they are then supposed to do is draw up an **independent report** on their findings and **NOT** let **vested interests** have the final say on what is and isn't admissable. Otherwise it isn't a fair and honest report.

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**cjfield**

6 Jun 2010, 9:13AM

This is a debate of pro-science and anti-science. No other foodstuff has been as stringently tested for safety than GM products.

It's safe! That's the scientific consensus. Left wing deniers, flat-earthers and nature mystics might believe otherwise but they are free to eat overpriced organic food if they want to. If anyone is harmed by GM pollution, they can always stump up another 50 quid for some diluted water to cure themselves.

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**edgeofdrabness**

6 Jun 2010, 9:13AM

the technology is safe and extremely tightly regulated.

That's what they always say before the first incident. Sometimes it's true, sometimes it's not.

It seems less likely to be true when the science is closely related to the establishment and maintenance of commercial monopolies to solve a problem which generally has other possible solutions with lower scientific risk (but perhaps they're not as politically acceptable).

In the case of GM foods, the low scientific risk answer to "not enough food in some places" is to redistribute it from the places that already have more than enough, given that the worldwide total is sufficient for everyone. A bit risky politically, that one, and there are not many post-politics career opportunities in it.

Wrt hour and three quarters to watch a video: I haven't watched the video yet (need to be elsewhere), but isn't an hour and three quarters about the same length as a football match?

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[PabloObscura](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:14AM

An IINDEPENDENT report does mean it can have elements from all vested interests.. are there things in the report that the anti-GM lobby have 'inserted'? If not then it imight be biased, if it is so then it is not biased... and anyways if the independent report agrees with GM then they are entitled to say so... just because the independent report comes down in favour of one side does not make it biased, it is there independent thoughts that happen to agree with one side...

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[Globalnomad73](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:20AM

Problems with GM are not 'only' (as if that wasn't enough!) re health impacts, or impact on biodiversity, but in putting start of food chain in hands of global commercial behemoths, making farmers MORE dependent on outside inputs... Happy The Guardian finally sheds some light on 'cosy' relation between Government & biotech industry lobby! In peace, Rianne

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[do3977](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:21AM

ridiculous, there is no need for GM foods, is there anything they wouldnt do for money?!

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[RainbowPony](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:21AM

Isn't the use of GM crops and associated pesticides iin the United States responsible for

the apocalyptic collapse of bee colonies there?

The new 'environment secretary, Caroline Spelman, who used to work as director of a biotech lobbying firm, said that she was in favour of GM foods "in the right circumstances".'

We can hardly expect her to be objective on this issue, can we now?

Allotment holders of Britain unite!

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[annemari](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:24AM

FundusVentriculi 6 Jun 2010, 1:37AM

If you can't be bothered to watch even a bit of a video because it's too long, you're not really best placed to give us information on the debate are you.? I dread to think what would happen if someone gave you a book (too many words) or a scientific article (too much thinking)

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[thesnufkin](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:24AM

I've suspect for a while that environmentalists were going to pay a high price for winning too easily on GM crops. As the things aren't growing in the UK we've no ecological disasters to point to and go 'told you so'.

But as we now have a former lobbyist as a minister and lobbyists writing a government report it seems we're to loose thanks to the good old fashioned tactics of buying the politicians and the regulators.

Oh well, destroying GM crops is fun and easy.

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[PabloObscura](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:29AM

Re GM crops... how about half the plants and animals we use are not native to the UK and have destroyed our habitats... natural or 'man-made'... same old problem.. If GM crops means fewer pesticides/herbicides/fertilizers and there is no bleed into the natural environment that is any worse than modern agri and no health side effects then go for it in a big way... but all this depends on unbiased research NOT funded by any lobby..

let's have rigorous science not just verbage..

<http://www.pgeconomics.co.uk/> is one site that has produced an interesting paper..

not sure how unbiased it is but it does give an antidote to the anti-GM debate

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6 Jun 2010, 9:32AM

cjfield,

"This is a debate of pro-science and anti-science. No other foodstuff has been as stringently tested for safety than GM products.

It's safe! That's the scientific consensus. Left wing deniers, flat-earthers and nature mystics might believe otherwise but they are free to eat overpriced organic food if they want to. If anyone is harmed by GM pollution, they can always stump up another 50 quid for some diluted water to cure themselves.

"

No. It is a debate between those who are manipulating science to say what they want it to say, and those who aren't.

The soi dissant pro "science" crowd like you, like Ben Goldacre, NEVER want to address the SCIENTIFIC reasons why, for example, grass fed free range beef, and milk from grass fed free range cows, is healthier, better than that from industrially farmed cows fed with cornmeal. Instead, the soi dissant pro "science" crowd comes up with studies that ignore those factors, and then trumpet their manipulated studies as "science".

The soi dissant pro "science" crowd, like you, like Ben Goldacre, love to attack meaningless targets like homeopathy for lack of science, but, at the same time, are entirely silent on cholesterol and cholesterol medication.

And if the scientific consensus is that it is safe, you should not have a problem with people making their own choices. Label every food clearly. Yes, everyone has valid opinion on GM foods, since everyone is being asked to eat the stuff.

[Recommend?](#) (16)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**PabloObscura**

6 Jun 2010, 9:34AM

@thesnufkin

so it goes like this... I don't get my way so I'll do what I want... now let's apply that to all problems... how about burning down a few churches, dead easy, or a few schools or well anything that doesn't go the way you want... it doesn't matter what other people think...

what if GM people started to destroy 'normal' farming because they are producing huge amounts of environmental pollution.. via pesticides etc.. is that OK

sheesh.. the maturity astounds me... argue your point logically AND with evidence from UNBIASED research.. and eventually people will agree.. after all this is a progressive gov..

[Recommend?](#) (2)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**Tehillim**

6 Jun 2010, 9:38AM

Excellent article, it appears that the recent resignations from the FSA have allowed the public a glimpse into a process which was always a foregone conclusion for a government hell-bent on introducing GM. This country - like the rest of the EU - is wealthy and fertile, it simply doesn't need to introduce GM crops. It is a wholly unnecessary introduction from which there's no going back: the only beneficiaries are multinational companies. Having seen Monsanto's bully-boy tactics against non-GM farmers in Canada (basically trying to strong-arm recalcitrant farmers into adopting GM or driving them out of business), we should be extremely wary of allowing them control over our grain crops.

The problem with GM crops is that we're not smart enough to predict the consequences. The Guardian recently ran a story of GM cotton in China, designed specifically to target the bollworm. It meant cotton farmers no longer needed to spray their crops with insecticide. On the face of it there were no downsides to the introduction of this crop, however cotton farms quickly became breeding grounds and safe havens for pests attacking neighbouring non-cotton farms, making the latter unviable. Scientists are calling for an urgent review of the situation, I suspect the outcome will be a resumption of insecticide spraying on cotton farms, whereupon it will be more economical to return to non-GM cotton.

The introduction of GM crops into the UK doesn't confer significant benefits to us, and will almost certainly result in unforeseeable consequences. We need to stop the government pandering to the interests of big business over the interests of the country.

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[Yanpol](#)

6 Jun 2010, 9:39AM

bailliegillies

IF their products are safe why can't they not put them on the open market like any other grower and leave it up to the buyer whether or not they want to eat their food, rather than bribing government officials who are supposed to act in our interests and not that of big business.

They can't because the EU operates a policy of GM-free agriculture (almost, Spain).

GM crops have proved to be safe time and time again, and those that have proved harmful have not been commercialized. But the air is saturated with scare stories.

Besides, the label GM is misleading, because it can refer to many different things. GM tomatoes were sold in the UK until 1999 and the public were very happy buying it. No harm has ever been reported on that particular crop. But then hysteria cropped in and they were withdrawn from the market and eventually banned.

No government office has been bribed here. The article states that the report was sent to pro-GM advocates and they sent their suggestions. The result was that:

b>Some of the amendments were rejected by the FSA, but others were accepted

Which shows that the FSA has **independence of mind**. But the FSA doesn't think that GM crops mean Armageddon and has shown that the claims of the organic lobby (another huge capitalist business) are not supported by science. So the Guardian has to present them as corporate shills.

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**epeeist**

6 Jun 2010, 9:40AM

@Fioanu

GM is really a disease

No it isn't. But Monsanto is.

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6 Jun 2010, 9:40AM

Excellent post here **773440** 6 Jun 2010, 2:29AM

Here's a short extract

The major, massive and unanswered objection to GM food production is that it creates sterile seeds whose use is controlled, whose very genome is patented, by profit-centred multinational corporations - who also produce the pesticides that go along with them. Specifically, it hands the corporations in question a monopoly over the production of particular staple crops, a situation that no sane economist or politician should countenance for a single second.

In a single generation, we could transfer control of our agriculture to corporate agribusiness interests. In the worst case, we cou

[Recommend?](#) (13)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**bornoffrustration**

6 Jun 2010, 9:52AM

"Some of the amendments were rejected by the FSA, but others were accepted."

In other words, She listened to what they had to say, considered the evidence and discarded the crap.

If you want something else, this is the Royal Society's view. Yes, I know I'm covering the same ground as yesterday.

<http://royalsociety.org/Reapingthebenefits/>

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