

GMOs: “Biggest Fraud in the History of Science”

Some 'Questions and Answers' for the UK's Royal Society

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The decision on whether to renew EU approval for the herbicide glyphosate is to go to an appeals panel on 23 June after a last ditch attempt to get a temporary re-authorisation failed on 6 June (for some background information, see [this](#)). It is unclear if the meeting will produce the majority vote needed to pass the authorisation. The current licence for glyphosate in the EU expires on 30 June.

In an ideal world, glyphosate would be taken off the commercial market due to its obvious [adverse effects](#) on human health and the environment. In such a world, the EU would at the same time be facilitating policies that would ensure a major shift towards more [sustainable agricultural practices](#).

In the world that we exist in, however, [commercial and geopolitical interests](#) trump any notion of what is in the public interest, what is good for the environment and strategies that could result in localised food production systems [to ensure](#) food security, thriving communities, nutritious food, replenished soils and climate-friendly practices.

These interests have succeeded in [rolling out a system](#) of economic plunder and bad food and poor health across the planet. If the ordinary person were [to engage in](#) biopiracy, ecocide, the devastation of livelihoods and to knowingly poison the environment and food, as these corporations have, they would face years of incarceration.

Instead, we find these corporations securing [privileged access to or control over](#) institutions and co-opting politicians, policy makers, scientists and regulators, who sit on powerful bodies masquerading as ‘public servants’ or mouth platitudes about serving humanity, while effectively [serving the interests of their real constituents](#): the global agritech/agribusiness cartel.

Conflicts of interest: the EFSA and the Royal Society

In February 2016, campaigner Rosemary Mason wrote to Dr Bernhard Url, Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), asking him some serious questions about the independence of EFSA committees. The letter comprised the fully-referenced document [‘Glyphosate causes cancer and birth defects. Humans are being poisoned by thousands of untested and unmeasured chemicals’](#).

Bernard Url failed to reply.

On 6 June, Mason wrote to the president of the influential UK’s Royal Society, Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, about conflicts of interest within the Society.

Venki Ramakrishnan failed to reply.

In late May, the Royal Society released the report '[GM Plants: Questions and Answers](#)'. The report reads less like an objective appraisal and more like a [pro-GMO whitewash](#) on GM crops.

The report conveniently fails to address the ongoing debate around glyphosate and, where it is briefly mentioned, it is in glowing terms. Given the prevalence of herbicide-tolerant GMO crops and its devastating [health and ecological](#) impacts, this is a serious omission. This should come as little surprise, however, as Professor Jonathan Jones who has [links with Monsanto](#) was one of the authors of the report and claims that glyphosate is not poisonous to mammals

Over the years, the Royal Society has consistently misrepresented the facts about glyphosate and GMOs, as highlighted by Steven Druker (discussed further on).

Mason has now penned another open letter ([Open Letter to the President of the Royal Society and GMO Scientists \(1\)](#)), to Ramakrishnan and GMO scientists who are members of the Royal Society.

If GMO scientists are pushing to get GMOs into the UK (and Europe), along with the associated chemical inputs, such as glyphosate, it seems reasonable to suppose that they would be both willing and able to respond to Mason's points.

Mason would like these scientists to address the crisis of independence that the EFSA and the Royal Society seem to be experiencing. For example, Mason notes there is no CV available for the public to see for Prof Dr. Achim Gathmann, Vice-Chairman EFSA GMO Panel 2016-2018, and concludes it is because he works for the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), Berlin: the very office which controversially declared glyphosate not to be carcinogenic.

She also raises the issue of transparency regarding three unpublished studies that the EFSA used to help base its decision on that glyphosate is not carcinogenic to humans (contradicting the WHO evaluation that glyphosate is '[probably carcinogenic](#)' to humans): the 2001 study owned by the Israeli pesticides company ADAMA Agan Ltd, the 2009 study owned by the Australian pesticides company Nufarm; and the 1997 study owned by the Japanese pesticides company Arysta Life Sciences.

The public must ask to view these documents by submitting their requests to the Health and Safety Executive's Chemicals Regulation Directorate. They will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mason cites examples of the EFSA GMO Panel 'adopting' GM without properly considering environmental consequences, despite it admitting to GMOs leading to problems of reduction in farmland biodiversity, glyphosate-resistant weeds and the destruction of food webs and the ecological functions they provide. Papers (cited by Mason) show that super weeds are massively destructive to the environment in the US and that over a period of 30 years there has been uncontrolled spread and contamination globally by many GM plants that are now herbicide resistant.

Prof Joe Perry (Chairman of GMO Panel) retired as a Rothamsted (a UK research institute involved with GM crop research) employee in June 2006. Mason argues he effectively

became 'Rothamsted's man in Europe.' From July 2006 he was permanently employed on various GMO Committees, until he took over from Harry Kuiper in 2012 as Chairman of the GMO panel.

While the EFSA claims that the GMO Panel is a committee of experts on GM, Mason provides concrete evidence that they are often anything but. She cites in great detail many examples of the use of flawed science, the ignoring of numerous studies that contradict the assertions being made by panel members and bad advice being offered by prominent and influential figures to push a pro-GMO agenda. At the same time, the EFSA does its best to play down the conflicts of interest among members.

Mason asks why did the EFSA conceal its own paper that discovered a hidden viral gene in GMO crops. Again, Mason suspects deception is the order of the day. She cites evidence to show that US and EU GMO regulators have for many years been inadvertently approving transgenic events containing an unsuspected viral gene which has potential harmful consequences. This, along with other cases detailed by Mason, implicates regulators and the industry in a circle of mutual incompetence and complacency.

Rosemary Mason brings attention to numerous key studies that highlight the adverse health and environmental impacts of GMOs and pesticides which have been ignored by the EFSA, and various conflicts of interest are noted regarding the Royal Society's 'Questions and Answers' recent report.

After having read the points raised by Mason (just a few have been outlined here – readers are urged to read her letter in full) along with the evidence she supplies, many might well assume that, at best, the EFSA is either complacent, or, at worst, incompetent or corrupt.

As a supporter of GM plants, she is quite naturally interested to know what the Royal Society has to say in response.

Mason then goes on to discuss Professor Gilles-Eric Séralini and his team's study showing the toxic and carcinogenic properties of glyphosate-based Roundup. She highlights the industry-motivated attacks he faced, which again were based on flawed assertions wrapped up as scientific fact: '[unscientific polemics](#)' masquerading as science.

And Royal Society members were prominent in these attacks.

Mason does not hold back in naming individual scientists, including members of the Royal Society, whose work she calls into question and whose reputations are at stake due to false, misleading or ignorant statements, academic fraud and corruption, gross scientific misconduct or unscientific papers that were subsequently retracted.

Supporting the biggest fraud in the history of science

The genetic engineering of the food supply is the [biggest fraud](#) in the history of science, according to Steven Druker, who provides firm evidence that governments and leading scientific institutions have systematically misrepresented the facts about GMOs.

Mason draws on Druker to make her case and concludes that if the US Food and Drug Administration had actually heeded its own experts' advice, told the truth and obeyed the law, the GM food venture would have imploded and never gained traction anywhere, and – as GMOs drive the sale of glyphosate – we would not have witnessed the massive increase

in the use of glyphosate which is causing devastation to people and environments across the globe.

In her letter, Mason makes clear to president of the Royal Society Sir Venki Ramakrishnan that Steven Druker has in fact already challenged the Royal Society over its pro-GMO bias. In [his open letter](#) to it, he challenged the Society to respond to the catalogue of questionable practices, the smearing of scientists who are critical of GMOs and false statements it or its individual members have been responsible for.

Although members of the Royal Society have been at the vanguard of the pro-GMO scientific movement in the UK, Druker has received no response. The Royal Society has not defended itself. It supports GM crops but refuses to have a rational debate about them.

Mason draws on numerous credible sources to show how modern agriculture and its practices and chemical inputs present a growing threat to humanity and the environment due to hormone-disrupting chemicals, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, crop monocultures, industrially produced fertilizers and pesticides, antibiotic feed supplements and degraded soil, etc.

She also provides quite a detailed summary of the deep politics of GMOs and the green revolution to place issues within a wider context.

Cesspool of corruption?

Recipients of Mason's various painstakingly researched open letters usually fail to provide any response. They should understand, however, that her letters are 'open' for the public to read. She conveys deeply held concerns that millions of people have about glyphosate and GMOs and would like to be addressed.

She – and by implication, the public – faces the similar blank responses that Steven Druker faced with his two open letters [to Monsanto](#) and the Royal Society. The public would like answers. Are we to conclude that the whole affair concerning GMOs/glyphosate is mired in "[a cesspool of corruption](#)"?

The fact we do not receive answers, are informed that we can read certain important reports in a '[reading room](#)', are offered a whitewash report on the GM issue by Britain's preeminent scientific body or can merely make requests to read texts (with no guarantee we will be given access) plants in the public's mind that something is being kept from it.

It also plants in the collective conscience that, while rich and powerful corporations and lobbyists secure privileged access to the corridors of power, the public is being treated with contempt and is being fed a constant dose of pro-GMO propaganda.

Rosemary Mason concludes her letter by stating:

THE AGROCHEMICAL CORPORATIONS AND THEIR PAID LOBBYISTS ARE CONTROLLING PESTICIDES REGULATION. SCIENCE, AND IN PARTICULAR THE ROYAL SOCIETY, THINKS IT HAS ALL THE ANSWERS. MANY GMO SCIENTISTS HAVE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.

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