

The Crusade in Favour of GMO: Falsehoods and Vilification will not Fool the Public

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

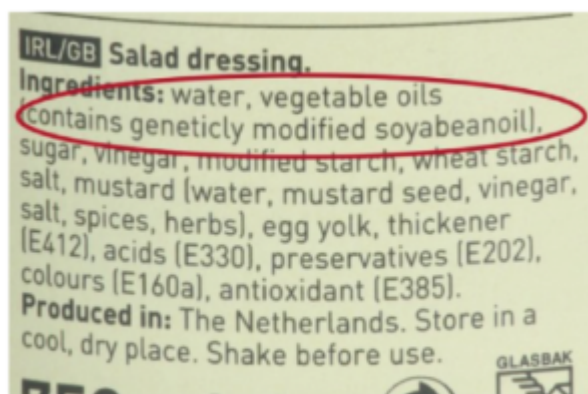
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Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

Pro-GMO campaigners often attack critics of the technology by claiming their negative views of it emanate from well-funded environmentalist groups or commercial interests in the organic food sector. The assertion is that such bodies promote falsehoods and scaremongering about GM to protect their own interests and that the GMO agritech sector has fallen victim to this.

Another claim is that critics rely on quackery on the internet or on some form of discredited science that is only carried out by those whom the 'scientific community' has seen fit to marginalise due to 'bad' science and a perceived political agenda.

The [gist of the argument](#) is that pseudo-science and a powerful ideologically motivated group are holding the world to ransom by conspiring to mislead the public and prevent the spread of GM, which according to pro-GMO activists, is denying the poor and hungry of the world access to food.



It's this way in Europe, why not in America?
(even if misspelled)

In a [recent piece](#) on Huffington Post, Jon Entine followed a similar line of attack to denigrate Rachel Parent, her family's business interests and the campaign which she heads, Kids Right To Know (KRTK). He calls Parent a well-polished 'crusader' against GM food. He also argues that on the KRTK website, there is a stream of studies cited that raise concerns about GM, but which, according to Entine, are predictably and conveniently labelled as being mostly a combination of fringe research and a collection of discredited, misconstrued and biased studies.

Entine claims to present a "well-reasoned critical analysis" of Rachel Parent's views by referring readers to a blog, where we are informed there are hundreds of independent studies on GM and they all show safety. During his lengthy attack, he concludes that Rachel Parent is a tool for vested interests.

Entine himself has a [history of 'hit' pieces](#) against prominent figures. If he wants to talk about people posing as a tool for vested interests, he is on very thin ice indeed in terms of his own situation: see "[the making of an agribusiness apologist](#)". Indeed, that ice melted long ago to expose his lack of objectivity or credibility as an 'independent' analyst.

It should be made clear that opposing GM is not affecting the world's ability to feed itself. Feeding the world is first and foremost a political issue. We hear much about the potential of GM, but the reality is that GM crops have been [fraudulently placed](#) on the commercial market, have contributed [nothing to alleviating food poverty or food insecurity \(have actually undermined it\)](#) and have caused a great deal of damage to [health and the environment](#) and [livelihoods](#) too.

The path to feeding the world lies in helping smallholder farmers to develop their (non-GMO) methods in the Global South, where the majority of hungry people live. These farmers are the [backbone of global food production](#). It also depends on challenging rigged trade, neo-liberal economics, structural inequalities and food commodity speculation, among other issues (see [this](#)).

We now have food surplus countries in the West which mirror food deficit areas elsewhere, of which the latter have become dependent on (US) agricultural imports and strings-attached loans and aid. Look no further than [Africa](#) to see what has happened. At the time of decolonisation in the 1960s, Africa was not just self-sufficient in food but was actually a net food exporter. Today, almost every country is a net food importer.

Food and agriculture has become wedded to power structures that have restructured indigenous agriculture across the world and tied it to an international system of trade based on export-oriented mono-cropping, commodity production for a manipulated and volatile international market and indebtedness to international financial institutions. The solution lies in nations prioritising food self-sufficiency and extricating themselves from a system of international trade and markets that have been manipulated for both the commercial and geopolitical gain of mainly the US and its agribusiness companies.

However, the continuous push to privilege GM ahead of anything else serves the commercial agenda of transnational agribusiness (and marginalises [other models](#) of agriculture that deliver proven results) and acts as an ideological and political device that diverts attention away from an economic system of 'globalisation' which is [fuelled by and serves](#) these companies. For example, the argument in favour of GM in India cynically plays on a situation created by this very system, as outlined [here](#).

The aim of the Pro-GMO lobby is to depoliticise the GM debate and to get us all to focus on the 'science'. But even when focussing on science, the pro-GMO lobby still fails to make its case.

The book '[Altered Genes, Twisted Truth](#)' highlights how GM is not based on sound science at all but on the systematic subversion of it. Then there is the claim that there have been hundreds of independent studies showing the safety of GM and the claim of there being a scientific consensus on GM. Both such claims were made by Entine in his piece and both are bogus.

Biotechnology seed companies, aided by advocates from academia and the blogosphere, are using their substantial resources to broadcast the myth of a 'scientific consensus' on the

safety of GMOs. In its [2014 report](#), Food & Water Watch dismisses the so-called scientific consensus that Entine and others like to claim.

The well-referenced report notes that the scientific bodies that purportedly are part of the 'consensus' are few in number and are by no means representative of the entire scientific community. The GMO-consensus campaign has misquoted or misrepresented these scientific bodies to falsely assert that they are part of a consensus on GMO safety.

The GMO-consensus campaign points to the Royal Society of Medicine and the Royal Society of London as part of the scientific consensus, but neither organisation has an official policy on GMO safety. The report notes the positions of several other leading scientific institutions and academies across the world that the pro-GMO consensus campaign has used to forward its case. It concludes that the campaign uses a mix of cherry-picked quotes, industry-backed sources and misrepresentations of positions held to feed its spin.

[Hundreds of independent scientists](#) in relevant fields have come forward to condemn the GMO-consensus campaign. The claim that all credible science is on the side of GM and only a few incompetent maverick scientists indulge in anti-GM pseudo-science is propaganda and nothing else. The aim is to propagate this falsehood time and again in the hope people will come to believe it.

There is also no consensus in the scientific literature. Entine and others like to cite big-lists that supposedly make the case for GMO. Begin to sift through these studies and it becomes clear the case is being [misrepresented](#) via a mix of industry-supported sources and listing studies that do not claim there is safety regarding GM and which are often not independent of the bio-tech industry.

There is a genuine controversy about GM, and the public as consumers are right to be concerned. Despite the pro-GMO crusaders trying to argue that environmentalists and the organic industry have undue influence and are misleading the public on GMO, this situation is far from the truth.

The massive wealth of the biotech/agribusiness industry has been translated into political clout within the media, science, governments and policies: for example, see [this](#) on the corporate hijack of the FDA and EPA in the US, [this](#) on the EFSA and Monsanto in Europe, [this](#) and [this](#) on the situation in India and [this](#) on the push to get GM into the UK over the heads of the public – of course, the secretive and corrupt TTIP could possibly achieve this in the long run; and then factor in the \$100 million spent to prevent labelling GMOs in the US and the amount spent on lobbying, advertising and campaign donations (see [this](#) about spending by Monsanto for the US alone).

The smear campaigns engaged in by pro-GMO economic neoliberal crusaders are intended to denigrate all criticism of GMOs in the eyes of the public, from wherever it comes. By attacking KRTK, Entine doesn't destroy or undermine the logic and facts upon which critics of GM base their arguments, including those of Rachel Parent. If anything, this type of hit piece, laced with the usual misrepresentations about the efficacy, safety and reality of GM, indicates a certain desperation and demonstrates a failure to convince the public about the need for GM.

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