



Research Brief

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Cherry-Picking Scientific Consensus to Serve Agenda-Driven Activism Against Genetically Modified Organisms

Activists Can't Have it Both Ways: Exposing the Hypocrisy of "GMO-Deniers"

Proving that scientists have reached a consensus on a controversial issue like global warming is difficult but doable. After years of research, discussion, and debate the scientific community has come to the consensus that the climate is changing. Activist groups like Greenpeace and the Environmental Working Group look to scientific consensus bodies like the National Academy of Sciences to justify their call for action to combat climate change and brand their critics as fringe thinkers.

But when it comes to another issue of scientific consensus, the use of genetic technology to enhance crops, those very same activist groups deny the science and attack anyone who seeks to appeal to the scientific consensus-building process as an industry shill.

There is an unequivocal scientific consensus that genetically modified crops are safe, but the same activist groups that criticize "climate change deniers" and brand skeptics as conspiracy theorists engage in the exact same activity themselves with respect to GMOs.

The following scientific consensus-building bodies all agree that climate change exists and that GMOs are safe:

Scientific Body	Position on Climate Change	Position on GMO Safety
U.S. National Academy of Sciences	<i>The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify taking steps to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.</i>	<i>To date, no adverse health effects attributed to genetic engineering have been documented in the human population.</i>
British Royal Society	<i>The work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) represents the consensus of the international scientific community on climate change science.</i>	<i>There is no reason to doubt the safety of foods made from GM ingredients that are currently available, nor to believe that genetic modification makes foods inherently less safe than their conventional counterparts.</i>

World Health Organization	<i>The science of climate change increasingly has achieved consensus among scientists, in particular through the assessments of the IPCC.</i>	<i>GM foods currently available on the international market have passed risk assessments and are not likely to present risks for human health. In addition, no effects on human health have been shown as a result of the consumption of such foods by the general population in the countries where they have been approved.</i>
American Medical Association	<i>Our AMA ... supports the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fourth assessment report and concurs with the scientific consensus that the Earth is undergoing adverse global climate change and that anthropogenic contributions are significant.</i>	<i>There is no evidence that unique hazards exist either in the use of rDNA techniques or in the movement of genes between unrelated organisms.</i>
American Association for the Advancement of Science	<i>The scientific evidence is clear: global climate change caused by human activities is occurring now, and it is a growing threat to society.</i>	<i>Foods containing ingredients from genetically modified (GM) crops pose no greater risk than the same foods made from crops modified by conventional plant breeding techniques</i>

Activists such as the Environmental Working Group (EWG), Greenpeace, and others are engaging in manipulative selection. An international scientific consensus is sufficient justification for conducting campaigns to place restrictions on industries to reduce carbon emissions, but an international scientific consensus endorsed *by the same scientific organizations* is *not sufficient* to get activists to give up their crusades against genetically improved foods. When activists are presented with the consensus on GMOs, many deny it exists.

Activist Groups	Position on Climate Change	Position on GMO Safety
Environmental Working Group	<i>The various climate change models may differ in the precise details of what will happen. But all the models, in a scientific consensus, say that the climate will become more volatile, weather will become more unpredictable, there will more severe storms, droughts, floods, colder and warmer temperatures.</i>	<i>The truth is, the scientific community has not reached a consensus on GMOs.</i>

Greenpeace	<i>There is, in fact, a broad and overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change is occurring.</i>	<i>Furthermore, the inherent risks associated with GM crops are not consistent with the government's programmes to promote white corn as a healthier staple since there is no clear scientific consensus about the long-term safety of GM foods.</i>
Food and Water Watch	<i>"The IPCC presents the scientific consensus..."</i>	<i>"Well, first of all, I would disagree that there is any international agreement that genetically engineered crops are safe..."</i>
The Sierra Club	<i>Scientific consensus affirms global warming is occurring .</i>	<i>The long-term impacts of GMOs are unknown, and once released into the environment they cannot be recalled.</i>
Green America	<i>There is a nearly unanimous scientific consensus that our planet is warming beyond what natural cycles could produce.</i>	<i>Currently, there is no scientific consensus on the benefits or risks of GMOs, but a trio of recent studies should give us pause.</i>

International scientific consensus gives these groups like EWG and Greenpeace an opportunity to establish credibility on certain issues, but when the consensus doesn't help their platform they willingly ignore it in favor of a radical anti-capitalist agenda.

It is a clear hypocrisy for these activist groups to embrace consensus on climate change and to choose to deny consensus on GMO safety, especially when the same scientific organizations support the consensus on both issues. It takes significant effort for the scientific community to reach consensus but little effort for activists to cherry pick as they please.