

UK: Seeds of another GM row are sown

Humbug. Christmastide would not be the same without the word. But while it is usually Scrooge's denouncement of the festivities, this year the gloriously unrestrainable Owen Paterson has beaten that arch-apostle of austerity to it.

Not that, as far as I know, the new(ish) Environment Secretary has anything against the season of goodwill. His outburst – in an exclusive interview with The Daily Telegraph this week – was directed at opponents of genetically modified crops and foods. And it seems set to revive a row which for a decade has appeared as dead as Marley himself.

There is still a lack of really good studies [on the safety/effectiveness of GM foods] either way. So there is much to debate, if only we can have a mature exchange, avoiding the false certainties of either side. Mr Paterson may have “no doubt whatever” as Scrooge did of Marley's demise. But without a more sophisticated approach, the issue looks like once again coming back to haunt a government.

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