

Biofortified debates Consumers Union over GMO regulation, safety and labeling

(Summary)

Anastasia Bodnar, co-director of *Biology Fortified*, a non-profit organization aiming to increase public education about genetic engineering in agriculture, debated the GMO controversy at a meeting of the Grafton County Farm Bureau in New Hampshire earlier in October with Michael Hansen, evolutionary biologist and senior scientist at Consumers Union.

Leveraging his prominent platform at Consumers Union, Hansen has vigorously lobbied against the adoption of genetic engineering for more than a decade. He recently came out in favor of I-522 in Washington, and made a commercial pitch, urging its passage. He has argued that the labeling bill would not raise the price of food.

Bodnar, a geneticist and agriculture scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture, is a strong supporter of crop biotechnology, claiming that it offers unique sustainability advantages.

The debate covered a range of topics, including regulation, feeding studies, general safety and the economics of genetic engineering. Hansen criticized the government's food safety assessments while Bodnar argued that all genetically modified crops undergo the same thorough assessments as any other food product or additive. She stressed that there are nearly 2000 studies that show the overall health and environmental safety of GM crops, while Hansen countered by citing one study that purportedly shows GM corn causing tumor growth in rats. The study Hansen cited—by crusading anti-GMO scientist Gilles Eric Séralini—has been [analyzed](#) and [dismissed](#) by every major food and safety organization in the world because of its shoddy construction.

Hansen also revealed that he believes that the companies and/or regulators are illegally withholding damaging information about the health and safety effects of GMOs, although he provided no evidence to support this conspiratorial belief. He did criticize documentaries and activists who try to link every illness under the sun with GMOs.

After the debate, Bodnar and Hansen took questions from the audience, covering topics such as labeling, Europe's regulation of GMOs, tests for novel allergens and "contamination" issues. When one audience member asked if GMOs are the cause of rising rates of obesity, cancer and other afflictions, both scientists agreed that correlation does not imply causation.

Read the full, original story here: ["Watch the Bodnar vs Hansen Debate in New Hampshire"](#)