

Chipotle's anti-GMO "Farmed and Dangerous" series irks farmers

The name of Chipotle's Hulu series says it all. ["Farmed and Dangerous"](#) is, according to the restaurant chain, a "comedy series that explores the outrageously twisted and utterly unsustainable world of industrial agriculture." Not surprisingly many farmers have taken issue with the portrayal of their livelihoods.

Since its founding over twenty years ago, Chipotle has tried to differentiate themselves from other restaurants in the fast-casual space by offering "Food With Integrity." They tout hormone-free dairy, antibiotic-free, humanely raised meats, and have recently taken a stance against genetically modified foods. The company discloses the presence of GMOs in their food and is working on removing GMOs from their menu.

With the release of their video series the company is taking a stand against industrial agriculture. Chipotle prefers to source food for its 1,600 restaurants through family farms, they've said. According to a USDA (PDF) report released this summer, 96% of US crop farms are family farms. Family farms have gotten bigger and more diverse in recent years. One large farm might grow grow GMO, conventional , and organic crops in order to diversity income streams. So are they all "dangerous" according to Chipotle?

"What I do works best for me," Larry Sailer, a grain and hog farmer in Iowa told [USA Today](#). "Over the years from my experience I've evolved into what I think is best for the animals. They [Chipotle] put down big ag but they're big food. I just don't appreciate the way they are going at it."

"Farmed and Dangerous" is a reaction to the misinformation spread by big-ag, says Chipotle, but many farmers say the series is full of its own inaccuracies.

Kristen Reese, who grew up on a farm, raises sheep, and blogs at [Reese Family Roots](#) writes:

I would argue that, rather than "Big Ag" trying to peddle poison for profit, the real deception out there is "Big Chipotle" peddling lies and misinformation to give a perceived benefit to their products over the competition — goading consumers into ponying up more cash for their "healthy" burritos. Let's stop slinging inaccurate information and farmers and Chipotle get down to what we both do best, raise food and make burritos. Whether you choose to eat their burrito or not, let's not have a foodfight!

"Farmers and ranchers are not happy with the continued attack from Chipotle," wrote Ryan Goodman, a former farmer who now works to get farmers' messages out to the public, on [CNN](#).

With such a production budget and a marketing team that knows how to sell to emotions of the consuming audience, Chipotle continues to win over fans with information and portrayals that are much less than accurate of our modern food growers. If Chipotle is so adamant about getting us to learn more about where our food comes from, why spend millions on animations

and comedies? Why not talk to actual farmers and ranchers who are on the ground and know more about growing food than marketing executives?

Chipotle has an open invitation from Jennie Schmidt, a registered dietician and farmer in Maryland, who was offended by the series and the depiction of farms like her family's in Maryland. She took to her website [The Foodie Farmer](#) to air her grievances. Her farm grows both conventional and biotech crops. "My family farm is not dangerous. We have an open door policy and welcome people to come for tours and learn how we farm," she writes. "Our business is wide open, you can drive by any day of the week and witness for yourself what we are doing. In fact, we'll give you a tour!"

Additional Resources:

- [He said / She said: Are GMO "secrets" just inconvenient truths?](#), Genetic Literacy Project
- [Chipotle's claim of reduced GMO use crumbles under scrutiny](#), Mother Jones
- [Evaluating competing claims about genetically modified crops](#), Journal of Economic Perspectives