

## CNN's irresponsible article on '10 ways to avoid GMOs'—No, GMOs are not unsafe

With GMO labeling on the minds of many Americans these days, CNN managed to drive a lot of web traffic last week with the piece [10 ways to keep your diet GMO-free](#). Reprinted from Upwave.com, the article demonstrates a clear anti-GMO bias and tries to make the case that GMOs cause human health problems, although there is no scientific evidence that supports that claim.

The article relies on questionable sources and had numerous mistakes and unscientific assertions. Let's begin with its citation from the American Academy of Environmental Medicine:

In fact, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine has asked physicians to advise all patients to avoid genetically modified foods altogether.

The assertion sounds authoritative and grounded in fact. But it is not. AAEM is a fringe organization. The 'environmental medicine' that it endorses is not recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties as a legitimate specialty, and the organization itself is [on Quackwatch](#) as a dubious organization. Here's a [great write-up](#) dissecting the reliability of the organization and whether it can be trusted.

Now compare the Academy's statement to those of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Medical Association, United States National Academy of Sciences, World Health Organization, the Royal Society of Medicine (UK) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, just to name a few, that maintain the safety of currently available genetically modified foods:

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. – World Health Organization

Jeffrey Smith, head of his one-man organization, the Institute for Responsible Technology, was the major source for many of the dubious scare claims in the article. He is a known anti-GMO activist with no health or medical expertise. Balanced reporting is widely accepted as a core value in journalism, and the views of not one mainstream scientist was cited. So then what's the difference between CNN's article and a (free) public relations piece for Smith and his organization? The lines really blur there, especially with tip number four:

**4. Join the Tipping Point Campaign.** This network of local activists is working to educate communities on the dangers of GMOs. "The concept is that by consumers avoiding GMOs, these ingredients will become a marketing liability, and companies will remove them," says Smith, whose organization launched the grass-roots movement.

The article was also scrubbed to correct more blatant editorial mistakes. The first day it appeared, Smith

was quoted as saying that aspartame contains a genetically modified organism, which is untrue. The article now stands corrected, but readers who read the article on the first day and did not return to it will never know that they were provided with misinformation.

Genetic Literacy Project food security advisor C.S. Prakash had this to say about CNN and the article on Twitter:

Sad to see CNN part of the tinfoil crowd now, as once it was a very trusted & respectable news source <http://t.co/Do6LeE8ITo>

— C. S. Prakash (@AgBioWorld) [March 25, 2014](#)

The misleading article spread far and wide and was widely discussed in social media circles. But while posting inflammatory articles may bring in web traffic, it is irresponsible for any news outlet to run articles that promote misleading information, especially on controversial topics like genetic engineering where many people obtain their information from the news.

Irresponsible reporting by CNN; leads with shocking headline they can't prove. – 10 ways to keep your diet GMO-free <http://t.co/9MO9DGBFkA>

— Tony Farrell (@TonyFarrell99) [March 26, 2014](#)

#### **Additional Reading:**

- [“GLP Infographic: International science organizations on crop biotech safety,”](#) Genetic Literacy Project
- [“What does a non-GMO label get you?”](#) Biofortified Inc