

At National Academy of Sciences, GMO critics say technology is “failing”

The National Research Council, the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences. The NRC prides itself as a prestigious science institution set up to provide expert studies to the nation’s policymakers.

Currently, NRC is taking another look at biotech crops in a report expected out in 2016. NRC stated the purpose of the biotech-crops study is to “conduct a broad review of available information on genetically-engineered (GE) crops in the context of the contemporary global food and agricultural system.”

The study “will assess whether initial concerns and promises were realized since the introduction of GE crops and will investigate new concerns and recent claims.”

Yet, the hearings on Monday and Tuesday offer a seat at the witness table to groups such as the Center for Food Safety, Food & Water Watch and Consumers Union. Each group has taken positions of adamant opposition to foods with ingredients from biotech crops. Some have called for outright bans on certain biotech crops.

The hearing list is filled with sustainability and organic advocates, anthropologists, sociologists, communication professors, journalists and independent researchers.

Among those testifying is Iowan Jeffrey Smith, who has written books and created films dedicated to criticizing genetically-engineered foods. Smith studied at the Maharishi University of Management in Iowa and is a self-proclaimed “leading consumer advocate promoting healthier non-GMO choices.” Smith has been on TV shows such as Dr. Oz arguing against biotechnology. Smith is the sole employee for an institute he created. Smith offers seminars for people to talk about “the dangers of GMOs.

Also scheduled to testify through an on-line connection is Gilles Eric Seralini, a molecular biologist from the University of Caen in France, Seralini has repeatedly published papers or attempted to publish papers claiming that foods derived from biotech crops are unsafe. He also has sued groups that criticized his work and methodologies.

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