

## Farmer asks, Why are scientists sitting on the sidelines in the GMO debate?

It's perhaps too easy to laugh off the whole GMO issue: the opponents so over the top, the proponents, including Monsanto, so earnest and ineffective. Because the scientific evidence is so overwhelmingly in favor of GMO safety, many mainstream scientists have essentially checked out of the debate, disgusted by the tactics of GMO opponents. Although Monsanto and others have finally realized there is a problem, it really is late in the game.

GM advocates have been slow to respond, or don't want to counter misinformation at all. I was recently on a panel with an expert on plant breeding. He was eloquent, authoritative, witty, and an effective advocate for science and more particularly the science of plant breeding. I had not met or spoken to him before the event, and afterwards congratulated him on his contributions to our discussion. I also asked if he'd be willing to speak to other groups about biotechnology. He grimaced and said: "only if it would do some good."

In a recent electoral debate here in Missouri about GMOs, pro-GMO groups approached a leading plant research facility in the state, asking for a public statement about the importance of genetic engineering to the future of agriculture. The institute, which is endowed with hundreds of millions of dollars and is doing important research in the field, declined to take a public position.

According to Jon Entine, the head of the Genetic Literacy Project, the last year has seen a realization among many in the media that the case against GMOs is without merit. The European Union is moving toward allowing more of the technology, and even India will soon allow GMO trials. Entine references a recent article in an Italian science journal, compiling some 1,783 studies done in the last decade about biotechnology. Researchers found "little to no evidence" that GM crops have a negative environmental impact on their surroundings.

Entine believes opinion leaders across the developed world have finally accepted the technology. I've visited with other astute observers of agriculture and technology who make the same observation. According to them, what we are seeing is nothing more than the kind of ruckus that surrounds any new technology, and we are well on our way as a society to accepting modern plant breeding.

I'm not so sure.

**Read full, original article:** [Scientists sit out genetic engineering debate](#)