

Why are “public good” GMO products sitting on developers’ shelves?

The U.S. National Academies of Science, as part of a new two-year study into the safety of genetically engineered crops, hosted [a public workshop in September](#), giving a prominent, prestigious platform to several anti-biotechnology activists, with a sprinkling of legitimate scientists and other experts thrown in to provide (false) balance.

The good news from the workshop is this: There were no surprises and no new data challenging the ongoing perfect safety record of GE crops and foods. If the most vociferous critics of the technology, in front of the world’s most prestigious scientific body, can’t articulate or document any problems new or unique to GE, then this alone shows there is no basis for public anxiety or the resulting regulatory appeasement, setting the approval bar far higher than is justified by scientifically valid concerns.

Interestingly, there was one issue raised by both proponents and opponents at the workshop—and a legitimate issue ripe for discussion: “Where are the public sector and small company GE crops serving the public good?” The anti-GE activists complained that almost all GE crops are owned by a small number of big private companies, and limited to just two traits: herbicide resistance and insecticide producing.

The rhetorical question is easily answered—the public good GE crops are sitting on shelves of public and small private breeding stations, unable to meet the regulatory compliance bar set largely by the public actions of the very anti-GE activists themselves, several of whom presented at the workshop. They may not know about the Specialty Crop Regulatory Assistance (SCRA) program, designed to facilitate U.S. regulatory approvals for small-market GE crops from public and smaller private breeding organizations, especially those with “public good” traits, such as enhanced nutritional profiles or improved water use efficiency.

Perhaps the Committee will address the lack of small-market GE crops in their deliberations and come up with recommendations on how to get public good, small-market GE crops over the regulatory hurdles without compromising environmental or health safety. At this stage we can only hope.

Read full, original article: [Debating the Debate on Genetically Engineered Crops](#)