

No, I haven't sold my soul to Monsanto

David Zilberman is an environmental economist and professor at the University of California—Berkeley.

Recently I was interviewed for an article published in *California Magazine*. It is a well-written article about the controversy surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMOs). I made my usual points: GMOs have actually done much good by reducing commodity prices, increasing yields, saving land and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the health of farm workers. It has a much larger potential, which is lost because of heavy regulation.

The day before the paper went to print the journalist asked me whether my work “was paid by Monsanto”. The answer was a clear and definite “NO”. I did this research as part of my main research work paid by the University and my chair. Actually, I had been working on GMOs before I even heard about Monsanto. I learned about this new technology and realized its potential, and ended up editing a special issue of a journal on the potential benefits and limitations of GMOs. Even the noted environmentalist David Pimental contributed to this issue, raising concerns about some aspects of the technology. I myself was concerned about intellectual property rights, access to and control of the technologies, access for the poor, and appropriate regulation. I have been working on GMOs now for more than 20 years.

Then I asked myself: Why do people assume that if you are pro-GMO, you are being paid by Monsanto? One answer might be ‘common knowledge.’ I have heard more than once that “everyone knows that GMOs are bad for health, the environment and society, and it has made evil companies like Monsanto rich,” and the implication is that since Zilberman is not ignorant he must be paid.

My response to this perspective – “Really? Who is everyone?”

Read the full, original blog: [Were you paid by Monsanto?](#)