Parallel universe of scientists who doggedly oppose GMOs

A critical part of the scientific process is the conversation phase after the experimentation is done. Scientists share their findings with the broader community through publications or presentations at meetings. What happens next is a back-and-forth discussion including a critique of methods or interpretation, and a comparison with previous findings.

If there are flaws in the experimental design or interpretation, other scientists will point that out. To participate in the conversation, scientists need to be willing to hear and respond to feedback. If there are conflicting results, it may require additional hypothesis making and experimentation. Only when the conversation runs its course do the conclusions become a part of accepted scientific understanding.

There are a dozen or so, much talked about studies, which appear to demonstrate health risks associated with GMO crops. They have not been accepted as a legitimate part of the body of scientific understanding. It is because the researchers who did that work never engaged in the conversation phase of science to respond to legitimate critiques about their work and to do what it would take to generate convincing data.

It is not because they challenge a dogma, as some of their supporters would claim.

Marcel Kunz, of CNRS in France, has quite articulately described this phenomenon as "parallel science" – a system that claims the mantle of science but which has no intention of contributing to the "orthodox," scientific conversation. Examples of "GMO-related" parallel science have been used to generate enough scary "data" to draw the attention of a credulous press and to arm anti-GMO groups with the narrative they need to drive their agenda.

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