

Russian outfit plans to spend \$25 million to secretly study GMOs

Back in November, a group that has campaigned against GMOs in Russia announced that it was going to do a massive study, feeding certain GM grains and pesticide to thousands of rats and watching for any health effects. The Russian [National Association for Genetic Safety](#) (NAGS) is calling its study “Factor GMO.” The organization is asking the public for donations to support the \$25 million study.

My initial reaction was: Sigh, do we really have to ride this merry-go-round again?

Good scientific research can be wonderfully useful in making good public policy. But new science does almost nothing to change minds about highly politicized issues — climate change, genetic engineering, vaccines — unless it is introduced with exquisite sensitivity. Whenever study results come out on politically entangled issues, one side works overtime to discredit them while the other side shouts them over and over in an echo chamber. Tribal alliances, not actual consideration, determine how most people interpret studies. It’s a dumb, wearying game.

The publicity surrounding Factor GMO has cast the study in the language of anti-GMO campaigners. Whatever the intentions of the organizers, it’s clear that perceptions of Factor GMO have already fallen into the usual polarized rut.

But since people who worry about GMO safety are funding this study, they are much more likely to be receptive if it produces results they didn’t expect. It’s poorly positioned to convince pro-GMO partisans that this stuff is dangerous, but perfectly positioned to convince anti-GMO partisans that it is safe.

Read full, original article: [Russian outfit plans to spend \\$25 million to secretly study GMOs](#)