

Union of Concerned Scientists join criticism of anti-GMO activist 'attack' on university researchers

The legal attack hit Kevin Folta in early February.

After receiving a FOIA request from U.S. Right to Know—a nonprofit dedicated to exposing “[the failures of the corporate food system](#)”—the University of Florida notified Folta, a food and agricultural science professor at the university, that he would have to turn over all of his e-mails relating to correspondence with 14 different firms involved in agribusiness.

The request is a response to public arguments by Folta that genetically modified foods are safe. Folta compares the strength of the scientific consensus on GM safety to the consensus on climate change and vaccines, and U.S. Right to Know—or USRTK—believes the food and agricultural industries may be pressuring Folta and other scientists into voicing such arguments.

U.S. Right to Know targeted 14 scientists at four universities. Gary Ruskin, the executive director of USRTK, says the move is essential for uncovering the food industry's efforts to manipulate scientists into advancing pro-genetically-modified propaganda.

“The agri-chemical industry has spent \$100 million dollars in a massive public relations campaign,” he tells WIRED. “The public has the right to know the dynamics.” The implication is that the scientists are working too closely with businesses who support genetically modified, or GM, foods.

Legal teams at the universities—Nebraska, University of Florida, UC Davis, and the University of Illinois—are currently evaluating the situation, but some scientists have already spoken out against the FOIA request.

The situation is part of a long and heated battle over the future of GMOs. But there's much more at stake than just food safety. For some, this FOIA request represents a serious threat to academic freedom as well as the right to privacy.

Read full, original article: [Anti-GMO Activist Seeks to Expose Scientists' Emails With Big Ag](#)