

Watershed: Records requests reveal abusive tactics of extremist GMO opponents

U.S. “Right to Know” (US-RTK) is a lobby group opposed to genetic modification (GM), and with the mandate to implement mandatory labelling of foods produced using GM technology. The organization has requested public records (such as emails) going back to 2012, from public university scientists who are engaged in educating the public about GM technology.

Dr. Kevin Folta, a professor and researcher at the University of Florida, is one of the 14 scientists the group has targeted. The following is from a conversation with Kevin regarding the RTK tactics, as well as his thoughts on the role of the scientist and public perceptions about genetic modification.

AWB: What are your thoughts regarding the Right to Know demand?

KF: They are using important transparency mechanisms to intimidate scientists, and dissuade others from participating in the discussion. It takes two things to show that there’s corporate influence in my statements. One is you have to show a connection. Two, you have to show that something was said that would not have been said if it wasn’t for that influence. I think that’s where US-RTK fails. Scientist opinions, and our discussions of the scholarly literature, would be exactly the same if those companies never existed.

AWB: Do you think this is about fear of the science, or is it based in dislike for corporations?

KF: There’s a certain group of people with a philosophy that comes from an anti-corporate basis, hell-bent on promoting organic production, which is fine – but they’ve become militant in their support for alternative production systems and therefore vilify those of us that also support the use of transgenic technology to help farmers.

When people start to indict science and make it seem that there’s something wrong with it, that’s when we have to work harder and communicate more effectively to more people. This is potentially a watershed moment. People were very turned off by the way climate change deniers went after the climate scientists. And they were very turned off by the way anti-vaxers go after physicians that talk about vaccines. This is the same thing.

Read full, original article: [Dr. Kevin Folta on transparency and the GMO debate](#)