

## Kevin Folta sets example on how to have civil conversation on GMOs

Dr. Kevin Folta, professor and chairman of the horticultural sciences department at the University of Florida, recently came to lecture at Iowa State University on transgenic crops (also known as genetically modified organisms [GMOs]) — what they are, what they can do and how to communicate about them.

Folta's lecture followed one by activist Dr. Vandana Shiva, which happened two weeks prior (*Feedstuffs*, March 23). Though the topic of Shiva's lecture was similar — she and Folta both discussed the impacts of transgenic crops — the two lectures could not have been more different. Not only did their content differ, but their communication methods and motives clearly were dissimilar.

Folta presented the scientific consensus regarding the safety of transgenic crops, explaining that plant breeding is inherently risky, but transgenic breeding methods present no more risk than conventional breeding.

Shiva rejected this consensus, claiming that there are health risks associated with GMOs despite the fact that no cases of GMO-related illnesses ever have been reported. In fact, Shiva supported her anti-GMO agenda with research that Folta noted was either discredited — like the work of Gilles Seralini — or distorted by the media — as in a study regarding placental cells and glyphosate.

Having listened to both Shiva and Folta, the biggest difference I could detect in their messages was the tone behind the messages. I fear that my fellow students left Shiva's lecture feeling scared, mistrustful and conflicted. I hope those who listened to Folta left knowing more about the science behind the technology and feeling more reassured about the future of food.

No matter how you feel about transgenic crops, one thing is certain: Using fear, blame and mistrust is not the way to start or end this conversation.

**Read full, original article:** [A civil conversation about the future of food \(commentary\)](#)