

If not anti-science, what's in the heads and hearts of GMO opponents?

For years, supporters and opponents of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) have debated questions ranging from the safety of engineered crops, to their effects on animals, plants, and the broader environment.

Dr. Stefaan Blancke, Ph.D., and colleagues sought to explain the GMO divide in an opinion paper published in *Trends in Plant Science*. The team defined “intuitive reasoning” to include “folk biology, teleological and intentional intuitions and disgust.” All four, they said, produce intuitive expectations about the world that “render the human mind vulnerable to particular misrepresentations of GMOs.”

“Negative representations of GMOs—for instance, like claims that GMOs cause diseases and contaminate the environment—tap into our feelings of disgust and this sticks to the mind,” Dr. Blancke said in a statement. “These emotions are very difficult to counter, in particular because the science of GMOs is complex to communicate.”

Jeremy Gruber, J.D., president and executive director of the Council for Responsible Genetics, told GEN Dr. Blancke and others are essentially marginalizing GMO foes.

“The effect of this study is to really capture the sentiment of many pro-GMO advocates think, and that is, those that have concerns over GMOs must be wrong, so let's find ways that we can rationalize why they are so foolish,” Gruber told GEN. “I don't think proponents of GMOs do themselves any service when they ignore the very real concerns of the public, when they call them anti-science, or some derogatory term.”

Counters Jon Entine, executive director of the Genetic Literacy Project, and senior fellow at the World Food Center Institute for Food and Agricultural Literacy at UC Davis: “I wouldn't necessarily call it anti-science.

“When you're acting on impulse and emotion, it's just another way to view the world. Plenty of our decisions are based not on science facts,” Entine told GEN. “But (anti-GMO critics) can't claim that they're basing it on science. They're basing it on other things. They're basing it on religious beliefs. They're basing it on ideology.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Moving the GMO Debate Beyond Science](#)