

New York Times publishes emails of Charles Benbrook, paid organic consultant who produced 'industry talking points'

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Charles M. Benbrook, formerly chief scientist at the Organic Center, left the organization in 2012 after concluding that he could get more traction for his research, which has questioned G.M.O. crop safety, by joining a university.

Benbrook set up his program at Washington State, with funding from companies including Whole Foods, Organic Valley, United Natural Foods and Stonyfield Farm. His research examined the benefits of organic foods and potential risks associated with GMOs.

Benbrook's research became a central talking point for organizations that have advocated GMO labeling, including the nonprofit group Just Label It.

[The Genetic Literacy Project has a background analysis of Benbrook's history and research [available here](#) . A full 100 percent of the former professor's research at WSU was funded by the organic industry — and that research is now the centerpiece of claims by the organic industry and used by Just Label It and other anti-GMO lobbyists to provide academic support for their campaigns.]

Just as agricultural biotech giants recruit academics to help block mandatory labeling, the organic industry does the same. Benbrook and others were asked to participate in a meeting with Walmart in an effort to persuade the company to back the labeling effort.

Benbrook also joined an effort to challenge approval of a new Dow Chemical product for use with GM crops. Again, Just Label It used third-party scholars as a lobbying tool. Dow Chemical also asked an academic to write the U.S.D.A. in support of the product's approval.

The New England Journal of Medicine published an article, co-authored by Benbrook, raising health questions about G.M.O. crops. The piece drew questions about Benbrook's conflict-of-interest disclosure. He later concedes that his financial relationship with G.M.O. critics should have been disclosed.

We provide a sampling of emails obtained through an open records request by The Times, showing how Benbrook, even while at Washington State, continued to work closely with organic industry including Organic Valley, and the Organic Center.

To view documents and emails and read full, original post see: [Washington State Professor Allies With Organics Industry](#)