

Organic industry winning 'contest of ideas' says Harvard professor

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"Organic farming," says Robert Paarlberg, "is the way everyone grew food prior to the adoption of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer in 1910. But farmers don't want to go back to 1910."

Paarlberg, adjunct professor of public policy at Harvard University, told folks attending the University of Missouri's Crop Production Clinic in Columbia, Missouri last month there are two sides when it comes to modern food production: one defends modern methods of food production; the other abhors modern methods and is determined to change the way food is produced and consumed.

The Indiana-born and raised Paarlberg is a champion of modern food production (he has written eight books about food policy, including "Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know.")

However, consumers are bombarded with anti-food and anti-farming messages in books, movies, magazines and newspapers and have thus won this "contest of ideas." Farmers and agri-business are comfortable with corporations; they believe in science. Opponents like neither of these, and have caved into an "anti-establishment" message.

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A troubling trend is that of state level initiatives for GMO labeling. "Vermont will have an initiative to enact mandatory GMO labeling in July," he says. "My guess is it will pass."

Many previous efforts at state level initiatives have been thwarted by farm groups and ag industry, but Paarlberg believes an unintended consequence is that biotech companies look as if "they have something to hide."

Read full, original post: [The War on Food is Heating Up, Harvard Professor Says](#)