

GM mosquito misinformation holding up Zika control in Brazil

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

As I wrote on this blog before, Oxitec's GM mosquito control technology is being held up in Brazilian red tape: a national agency called Anvisa – Brazil's official health surveillance regulator – has been sitting on its hands for two years, apparently unable to make a decision on the labelling of GM mosquito products.

Now a press release issued by Anvisa shows that the Brazilians – incredibly – don't even get the basics of what they're trying to make a decision about.

"The biological control technique applied by the company is to produce male sterile by ionizing radiation. These males are released in high local incidence of wild populations, with the expectation that wild females copulation with sterile males and do not produce offspring."

Wrong! Oxitec's male mosquitoes have been genetically engineered to carry a lethal gene that prevents subsequent offspring from surviving to maturity. This is very different from male sterility caused by irradiation, a much older technology which has been used in both mosquito and other pest insects in different parts of the world for decades.

Now... I have come across many different breeds of bungling bureaucrats in my time. But this really does take the prize: even as the World Health Organisation declares a global emergency for Zika, the Brazilian bureaucrats in charge of allowing a promising mosquito control strategy to go ahead *don't even know what they are looking at*. This basic error would be embarrassing to a high-school student, let alone a national authority faced with a global health emergency.

Read full, original post: Bungling Brazilians fail to understand basics of Zika GM mosquito control technology they want to regulate