

Mother Jones: New York Times report on GMOs used misleading statistics

[Editor's note: A [recent article](#) in the New York Times claims that GMO crops have not lived up to their promises of increased yields and reduced herbicide use. In this Mother Jones article, Kevin Drum writes that a dispassionate reading of the story suggests Danny Hakim manipulated statistics, perhaps even deliberately so.]

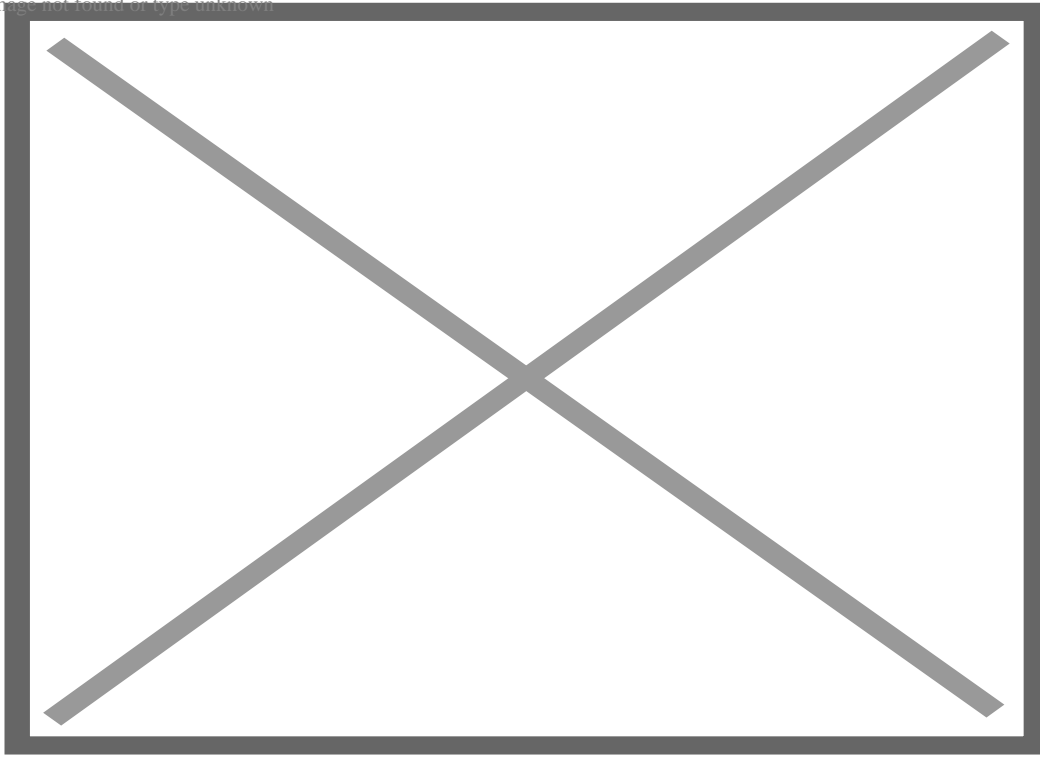
According to [Nathanael Johnson of Grist](#), The Times story says that in the US, despite the wide use of GMO seeds, use of insecticides has fallen but the use of herbicides has gone up. In France, by contrast, where they don't use GMO seeds, "use of insecticides and fungicides has fallen by a far greater percentage — 65 percent — and herbicide use has decreased as well, by 36 percent."

Using data from [University of Wyoming weed scientist] Andrew Kniss, [here's what this looks like in chart form](#):



It does indeed look like France is doing pretty well. But what if you look at the raw numbers, rather than percentages? Here's a chart from Kniss:

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In the case of herbicides, France started at a high level, and has only recently caught up to the US. In the case of insecticides, France started out way, way higher than the US and is still way higher despite their recent reductions. Looked at this way, it's clear that France hasn't actually done that well.

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If you click on the chart pack in the *Times* story, you will actually find charts showing raw volume of pesticide use in the US and France. However, they're shown in two different charts, using different units, and broken up into different categories. If you were deliberately trying to make a comparison nearly impossible, this is how you'd do it.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [How to Mislead With Statistics: GMO Crops Edition](#)