

Kevin Folta sues NY Times, reporter Lipton for ‘malicious’ 2015 profile labeling scientist Monsanto ‘lackey’

In a [complaint](#) filed [September 1st, 2017] in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, [University of Florida plant sciences professor] Kevin Folta contends that the [New York] Times and [journalist Eric] Lipton manipulated an interview to portray him as a “covertly paid operative” of Monsanto in order “to further their own anti-GMO agenda and in disregard of the truth.”

The suit stems from Lipton’s Sept. 5, 2015, story entitled “[Food Industry Enlisted Academics in G.M.O. Lobbying War, Emails Show](#)”. It ran on the paper’s front page the following day. The story reported that Folta received grant funding from Monsanto to help with “biotechnology outreach.”

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Folta’s complaint said the Times and Lipton “knew Dr. Folta has no financial ties to Monsanto — personal or research.” It said that Folta “made it clear to Lipton that his research was funded by a combination of federal and state grants,” and added that he “has not taken any money from any biotechnology company for his research or his salary.”

The suit says Folta, who is chair of University of Florida’s horticultural sciences department, received death threats as a result of the story. He is seeking unspecified damages.

A spokesperson for The New York Times told POLITICO in a statement that the paper will “defend the lawsuit vigorously.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: University of Florida’s Kevin Folta sues NY Times, reporter Eric Lipton for ‘malicious, false and defamatory’ 2015 profile that accused plant scientist for being Monsanto ‘lackey’ and ‘lobbyist’

The GLP includes relevant excerpts from the Folta suit:

- These defendants – to further their own “anti GMO” agenda and in disregard of the truth – manipulated an interview with Dr. Folta and then misrepresented him as a covertly paid operative of one of the largest and controversial companies in America, Monsanto, a company that produces GMO products.
- The Defendants knew Dr. Folta has no financial ties to Monsanto – personal or research. The Defendants deliberately chose the caption “if you spend enough time with skunks, you start to smell like one” to insinuate that Dr. Folta is a “skunk.” This was offensive, malicious, and reckless.
- Defendant Lipton spun an “unrestricted gift” – which means that it goes to the University foundation and has no expected deliverables – and changed the wording to “unrestricted grant” to Dr. Folta to

maliciously imply that there was a bottomless pit of funds with which to bribe Dr. Folta to do Monsanto's bidding.

- This malicious implication is – as intended – catastrophic to the reputation and emotions of an honest, independent public scientist. The damage is so catastrophic that it serves to silence the other honest scientists for fear of the same fate

[Kevin Folta Civil Complaint \[PDF\]](#)

Dr. Folta reflected to Mr. Lipton's article on year after the initial piece in this article: [Kevin Folta: One year after Lipton's NYT article, attacks on character continue](#)