Have GMO crops cut herbicide use? A tale of two conflicting studies

We have planted millions of acres of genetically-engineered (GE) crops, a vast majority of which are resistant to herbicides. In the U.S., we've collected lots of herbicide sales and usage data …. So we should be able to simply look at the herbicide data before and after GE crops were developed, and infer an answer. Right?

[Editor's note: Read Dr. Andrew Kniss' original blog post here.]

A few years ago, Charles Benbrook did just that and published his results in a paper that summarized pesticide data between 1996-2011 …. However, Graham Brookes looked at similar data spanning almost the exact same time period and also published his results in a paper.

…

How [could] two scientists could look at almost the same data, but come to such drastically different conclusions? How could the same simple question lead one person to conclude that herbicide use ***increased*** by 239 million kg, while another person concludes that herbicide use was ***reduced*** by 225 million kg?

…

I don't think it is possible to say for sure what the impact of GE crops has been. My personal opinion …. is that we've probably seen a net benefit with respect to both toxicity and the evolution of 'superweeds.' And one could even make an argument that adoption of GE crops has slowed the increase in herbicide use. But …. getting an answer to this question is anything but simple.

Read full, original article: Have genetically engineered herbicide-resistant crops increased or decreased herbicide use?