

Podcast: Do it for the kids? Federal children's health research grants fund anti-pesticide, organic food activism

Few people would object to the government financing children's health research. But how would taxpayers feel if they were funding organic food activism masquerading as children's health research? The question is worth asking because that's been happening for almost two decades. Since the 1990s, children's health research centers at major universities have used millions of federal dollars to fund questionable studies on chemical safety and organic food that have little to do with children's health. Environmental activist nonprofits then utilize this research to lobby for bans on the studied chemicals and sow doubt about the safety of America's food supply.

This arrangement went mostly unnoticed until the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) it would cut its half of the funding to these centers, with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) continuing to provide the other half. EPA's decision didn't sit well with the Environmental Working Group (EWG), one of the "partner organizations" that utilizes the questionable research to advance its anti-chemical lobbying. "The Environmental Protection Agency is cutting off its funding of a network of research centers that focus on the risks to children from toxic chemicals and industrial pollution," [EWG complained in May](#). "... [T]he cuts will endanger important studies underway at 13 colleges and universities from California to New Hampshire."

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Angela Logomasini

Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) scholar Angela Logomansini examined the situation in a three-part article series. Among the many odd programs subsidized by EPA and NIEHS, she found an Emory University-sponsored campaign encouraging pregnant women to take up [organic farming](#):

For example, eating organic food is touted among stakeholders as a way to reduce health risks, despite the fact that there's no reason to believe that organic food is healthier than other produce. The video even features a stakeholder who trains people how to farm organically in urban settings Is the center actually suggesting that it's more convenient and healthful for pregnant women to set up their own urban farms rather than take a bus to a grocery store?

But the situation gets even stranger. The EPA, for example, is currently battling an activist-proposed ban of the [insecticide chlorpyrifos](#) in federal court. The research being used to justify the ban, which the federal agency's scientific advisory panel [rejected as inadequate](#) in July 2016, was conducted at Columbia University's Center for Children's Environmental Health—[and funded by the EPA](#). This prompts an obvious question: why would the regulatory agency fund research it's now challenging in court? Logomasini joins GLP editor Cameron English on this episode of Biotech Facts and Fallacies to explain the origins of these research grants—and how they're often used to inspire unnecessary fear of important technologies.

Angela Logomasini is a senior fellow at CEI. She specializes in environmental risk and regulation. Her work has appeared in Forbes, The Huffington Post, New York Post and The Wall Street Journal. Follow CEI on Twitter [@ceidotorg](https://twitter.com/ceidotorg)

Cameron J. English is the GLP's senior agricultural genetics and special projects editor. He co-hosts the [Biotech Facts and Fallacies](#) podcast. Follow him on Twitter [@camjenglish](https://twitter.com/camjenglish)