

Podcast: Ban ‘factory farming’? GMO mosquitoes coming this summer; anti-biotech groups aren’t ‘grassroots’

As clinical trials begin of several candidate [coronavirus vaccines](#), a former FDA scientist says the agency could speed up its approval process and get a safe vaccine to market much faster. The EPA has approved a summer release date for disease-fighting GMO mosquitoes. Is this a public health victory or an impending disaster? Anti-GMO groups claim they are grassroots watchdogs, David taking on the biotech industry Goliath. New evidence gathered by the GLP raises serious doubts about this Bible-inspired narrative. Finally, two US senators want to ban ‘factory farming.’ How would their proposal impact food production?

Join geneticist Kevin Folta and GLP editor Cameron English on this episode of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- [Viewpoint: ‘We can’t afford miscommunication or bureaucratic foot-dragging’ in the quest for a coronavirus vaccine](#)

Experts have said a COVID-19 vaccine won’t be ready for at least 12-24 months, and will probably take much longer to reach consumers. Former FDA scientist Henry Miller argues his ex-agency could shorten that timeline by eliminating certain regulations and testing procedures, without putting public health at risk. “Covid-19 is a genuine emergency,” Miller writes. “Drug and biotech companies and academic institutions are doing their part, and regulators need to, as well.”

- [EPA approves GM mosquito trial in Florida Keys to combat zika virus and dengue fever](#)

The EPA has approved the release of a genetically engineered *Aedes aegypti* mosquito designed to suppress its disease-vectoring wild relatives. The modified insect carries a [self-limiting gene](#) that prevents its female offspring (the ones that spread diseases) from surviving. Over time, this approach crashes the invasive mosquito populations that spread [Zika](#) and [dengue](#), both of which can be very harmful.

But critics allege GMO mosquitoes pose a serious ecological risk we may not be able to control once they’re released. What does the science say?

- [Anti-GMO Advocacy Funding Tracker: Vast network of donors and NGOs seed doubt about crop biotechnology](#)

Anti-GMO groups present themselves as ‘grassroots’ activists blowing the whistle on unethical biotech companies. A year-long investigation by the Genetic Literacy Project confirms that this story is an exaggeration, to say the least. Activist groups, it turns out, have received nearly a billion dollars in recent years from organic food companies and wealthy foundations, which finances their carefully orchestrated campaigns to demonize mainstream scientists who teach the public about crop biotechnology.

- [Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker propose phased in ‘factory farming’ ban to clamp down on ‘Big](#)

[Ag'](#)

With the US facing [meat shortages](#) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, senators Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker recently proposed that so-called 'factory farms,' technically known as [concentrated animal feeding operations](#), be outlawed in the US by 2040. "For years, regulators looked the other way while giant multinational corporations crushed competition in the agriculture sector and seized control over key markets," Warren said in defense of the legislation. "The COVID-19 crisis will make it easier for Big Ag to get even bigger, gobble up smaller farms, and lead to fewer choices for consumers." Is there any truth to these claims, and how would the ban impact food production in America?

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