

Podcast: Anti-GMO 'documentaries'; Cancel culture v Darwin? Biotech chestnut trees

So-called 'cancel culture' has already taken down a handful of prominent scientists and philosophers, living and deceased. One evolutionary biologist warns Charles Darwin might be next. A former organic farmer says popular anti-GMO, anti-farming documentaries are little more than "propaganda." The USDA is poised to green light a disease-resistant, GM chestnut tree, but activist opposition remains intense. Will science-based thinking push it over the finish line?

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:

- [Will 'cancel culture' claim Darwin?](#)

A formidable scientist though he was, Charles Darwin endorsed some downright racist ideas. His bigoted comments about "savages" and "barbarians" and suspected support for eugenics have landed him in hot water in the era of "cancel culture." Because other prominent thinkers from the era, like philosopher David Hume, have already been "cancelled," some in the science community expect that it's only a matter of time before Darwin meets a similar fate. Can we acknowledge and reject Darwin's abhorrent comments about race without dismissing his key insights about biology?

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- [Cowspiracy? GMO OMG? Beware of misleading food 'documentaries,' ex-organic farmer warns](#)

Documentaries like "Cowspiracy" and "GMO OMG" have found massive audiences thanks to streaming services like Netflix. But for all their flashy production value and compelling anecdotes, these films are nothing more than anti-science "propaganda," argues former organic farmer Jonathan Lawler: the "equivalent to what I shovel out of the cattle pens," he writes. What do these films get wrong, and why does the public find them so convincing?

- [Viewpoint: Activists aim to block GM chestnut tree by hyping potential risks and ignoring real benefits](#)

As the USDA considers green lighting the first-ever genetically engineered tree, a disease-resistant American chestnut, biotech skeptics have come out guns blazing to block the approval. They've fallen back on a handful of seemingly compelling arguments, warning that the disease resistance trait won't last; that it could hinder the chestnut's growth; and that it violates the property rights of indigenous groups in regions where scientists plan to release the GM trees. Do these claims stand up to scrutiny?

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