

Podcast: This GMO ‘almost’ wiped out all life; Here comes AquaBounty salmon; Pregnancy, chemicals and junk science

Did you hear about the genetically engineered microbe that almost wiped out all life? It got widespread attention in the late 1990s—though it never actually existed. A major US seafood wholesaler has announced it will carry AquaBounty’s fast-growing AquAdvantage salmon, signaling that anti-GMO groups may have finally lost of the fight over biotech fish. Recent news reports suggest that pregnant women are exposed to all sorts of harmful chemicals. How much risk do these expecting mothers and their babies face?

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:

- [Did you hear the story about the GMO that almost destroyed the world?](#)

In the early 1990s, researchers tried to engineer bacteria that could turn plant waste into ethanol, the idea being to ferment useless material into useful chemicals that could be used, say, as biofuels. The anti-GMO movement reacted to this effort with unmitigated horror and for many years after used the GM microbes as an example of [technology that](#) “could have literally killed every terrestrial plant on the planet.” While the original research was real, the scandal that followed was entirely fabricated, based on a non-existent study which the author later acknowledged in a public apology.

In retrospect, the situation offers some important lessons about the GMO debate.

- [GM fish coming soon: Major US seafood wholesaler will carry AquaBounty’s AquAdvantage salmon](#)

Anti-GMO groups lobbied major grocery chains and food distributors for decades in a bid to prevent the sale of AquaBounty’s genetically engineered salmon. The fish, modified to grow year-round, consumes far fewer resources, enabling important sustainability benefits and lowering prices for consumers. Now that the fish is poised to hit the market, will it go on to win widespread public acceptance?

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- [Viewpoint: Heard reports that dozens of environmental chemicals found in pregnant women pose health dangers? It’s junk science, and here’s why](#)

A recent study found that chemicals ubiquitous in the environment could harm pregnant women. The research was widely reported by the mainstream press, though questions have surfaced about the source of the study, a scientist at a university with close ties to anti-chemical activists, as well as the validity of its conclusions. Do chemicals pose a health risk simply because they are present, or is there more to the story?

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