

Podcast: Media's COVID hypocrisy; Mandatory vaccines; Biodegradable plastic from GM plants

The mainstream press has viciously criticized COVID conspiracy theorists and vaccine rejection. Yet when it comes to other critical science topics, say pesticide safety and animal agriculture, the media uncritically amplifies conspiratorial thinking and bad science. The Supreme Court has ruled that the government can make vaccination mandatory in the interest in public health. Are there any downsides to such a policy? Plastic pollution is a critical environmental problem; GM crops that produce biodegradable plastic might help finally solve the problem.

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

- [Follow The Science? How The Media's Hypocrisy Undermines Critical Thinking In The Age Of COVID](#)

The same media outlets that tell you to get a COVID vaccine and reject coronavirus conspiracies will also promote organic food as a safer choice, though there is no evidence behind such a recommendation, and spread myths about the dangers of so-called "industrial farming." How do these double standards impact the public's trust in scientists?

- ['Public health can supersede individual rights': Government mandated vaccinations are not violations of personal liberty, courts determined a century ago](#)

Does the government have the authority to require Americans to be vaccinated? Yes, says the Supreme Court; protecting public health from an infectious disease supersedes any claim to individual rights. Moreover, many experts say such a policy is necessary to reach herd immunity when too few people refuse to get vaccinated. Is it possible that this heavy-handed approach will backfire, actually decreasing vaccine uptake, or are Americans just hyper-skeptical of their government?

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- [Biodegradable plastic from plants: How GE camelina could advance industrial sustainability](#)

Plastic pollution caused by single-use items like food containers and consumer products remains a serious environmental problem globally. As far fetched as it sounds, the best solution may be growing eco-friendly plastic in genetically engineered plants. Biotech firm Yield 10 Biosciences has engineered two varieties of camelina that produce polymers called PHAs (polyhydroxyalkanoates). Produced naturally by bacteria, they're completely biodegradable and thus could serve as renewable sources of plastic, as well as animal feed and biodiesel. Such an innovation is good news for everybody, except perhaps environmental groups with anti-GMO sympathies. But how would they oppose a technology that could

have such a tremendously positive impact on our planet?

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