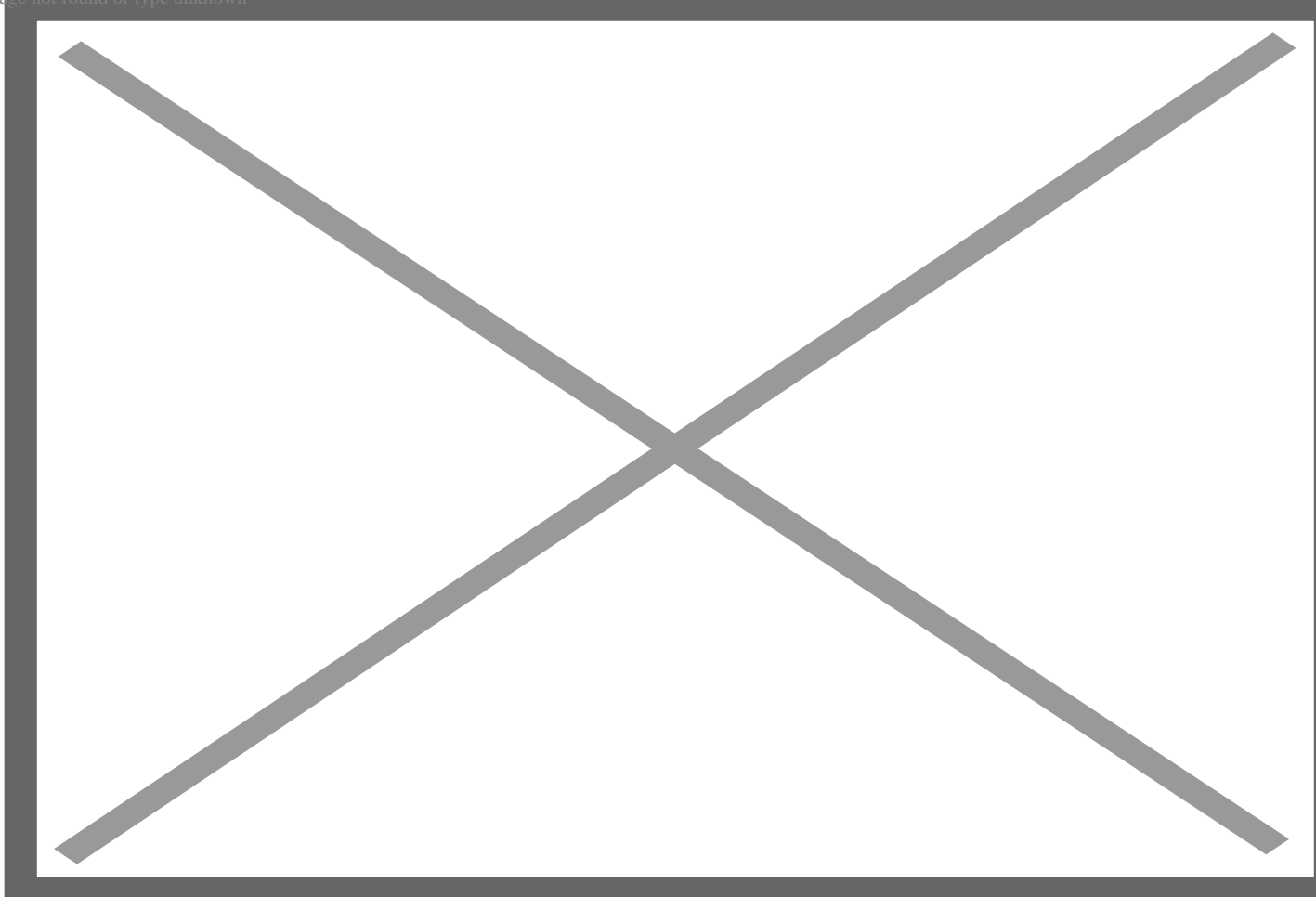


A new European-based organic grocery store came to town. Why does it misrepresent the advantages of organic and the disadvantages of GMO foods?

There's a new grocery store opening up in my hometown, McLean, VA. It's called Lidl (pronounced *Lee-dul*), and it's headquartered in Neckarsulm, Germany. My sister told me she shops at a Lidl and loves it so I am looking forward to it, but I think it would be wise for them to take a look at the most up-to-date science in their advertising.

A sign out front says "[Lidl's] approach will also make Lidl a fierce competitor in the organic, non-GMO and gluten-free sector." That's apparently a quote from Fox News which also cited a study that shows that Lidl's low prices forced other grocery retailers to cut their prices by up to 15%. That's good, but I hope it won't force other grocery retailers to compete on their "quality."

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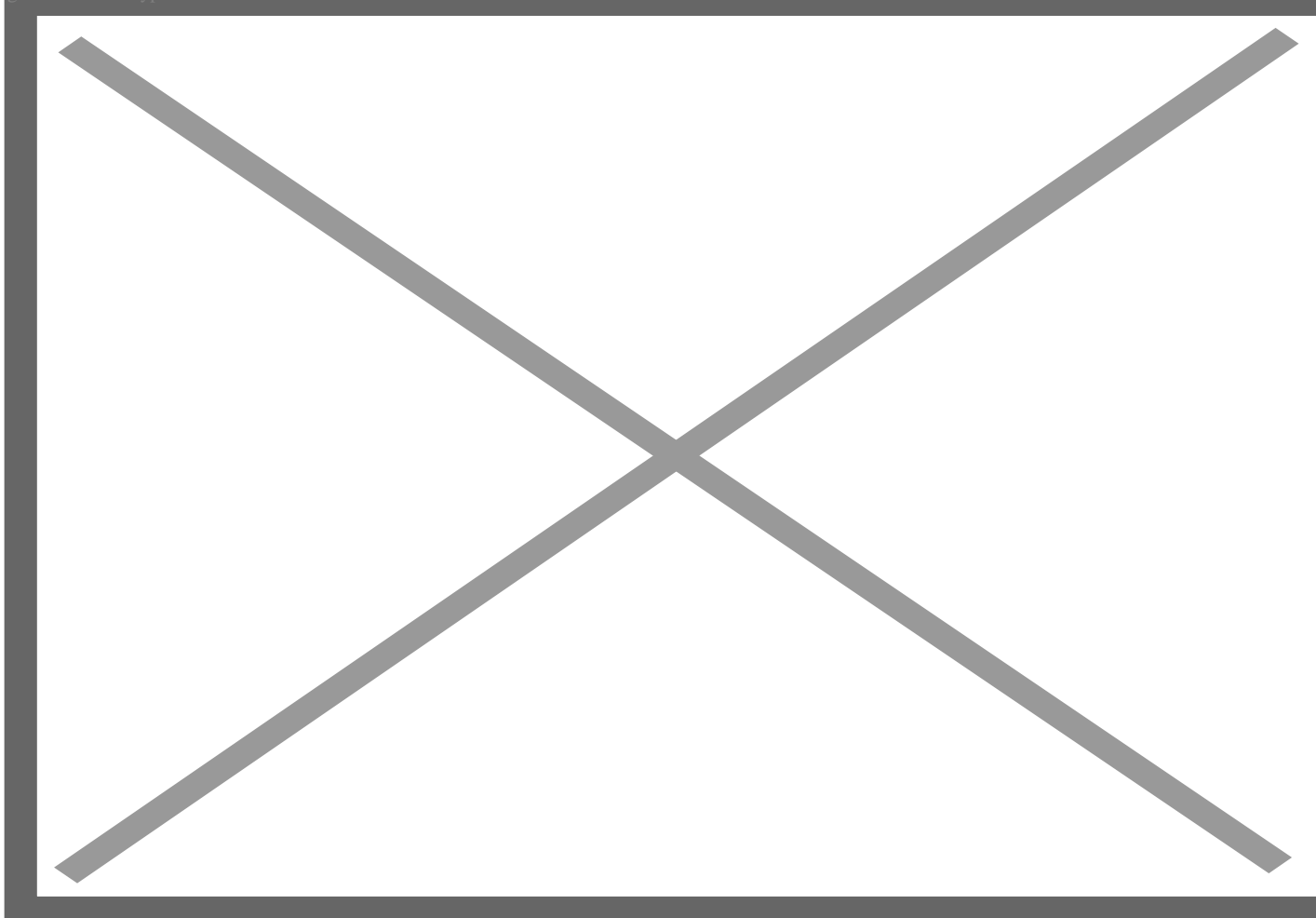
Credit: Lidl

Let's start with organic. The whole idea may have started by Lady Eve Balfour, a British organic farmer who wrote the classic, [*The Living Soil*](#) in 1943. But hey man, like you know, it was really the hippies that

got into organic in the 1960s.

Organic produce is neither safer or healthier and studies have shown it over and over again. Organic producers use a lot of the same pesticides as conventional foods and it is the plant that makes most of the pesticides (99.99%). One [meta study](#) that looked at hundreds of studies put it this way, “The published literature lacks strong evidence that organic foods are significantly more nutritious than conventional foods.” Despite this fact, the Organic Trade Association [says](#) that parents buy organic foods for better health and “to avoid toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers.” USDA reports that people pay 7% to 82% more for organic produce over conventional. Sometimes it’s worse. A \$2.99 2-pound bag of organic red onions was 205% more expensive than the conventionally grown kind.

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Credit: Lidl

It's also bad for the environment. A [study](#) done in 2014 found that to raise all U.S. produce organically would require one hundred nine million more acres of land or the area equivalent of all parkland and wildland areas in the lower 48 states. With a growing world population, reducing yields by [half](#) using organic farming would be a disaster.

The non-GMO issue is also not only wrong about safety and it's bad for the planet. As Jon Entine of the Genetic Literacy Project [says](#):

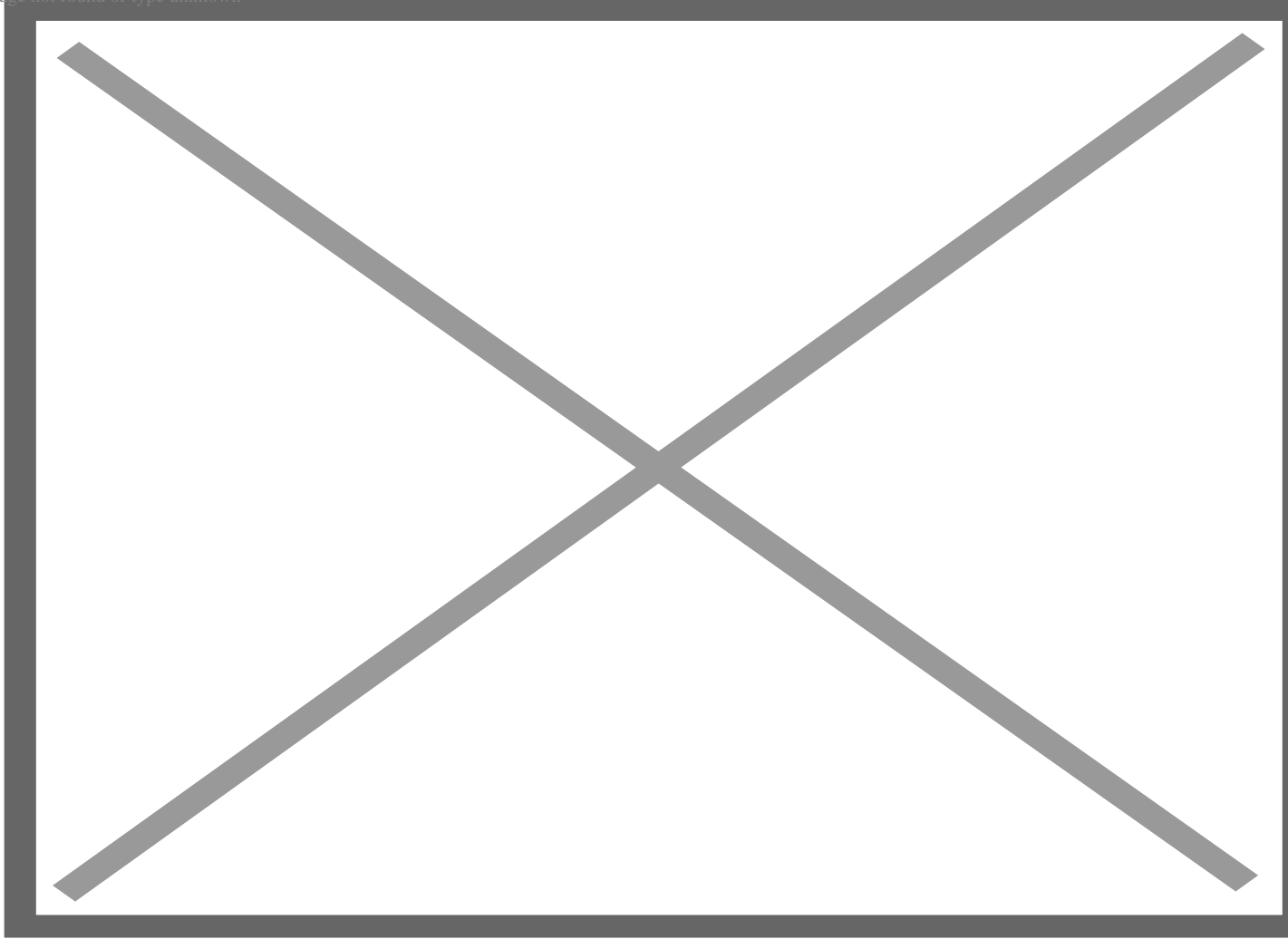
Do GMOs adversely impact humans? Thousands of studies have been performed over the past 20 years attempting to answer in part that question. The consensus, of course is 'no,' and it's supported by massive numbers of independent reviews by, among others, the [National Academies of Science](#) in the US and the [European Commission](#).

As for the planet, here's just one citation from [Michael Stebbins](#):

In 2016 alone, growing GMO crops helped decrease CO2 emissions equivalent to taking 16.7 million cars off the road for an entire year. GMOs also reduce the amount of pesticides that need to be sprayed, while simultaneously increasing the amount of crops available to be eaten and sold. Over the last 20 years, GMOs have reduced pesticide applications by 8.2% and helped increase crop yields by 22%.

Again, we are going to need better yields that GMO plants can give us to feed a world population that is expected to reach 9.7 billion (an increase of 23%).

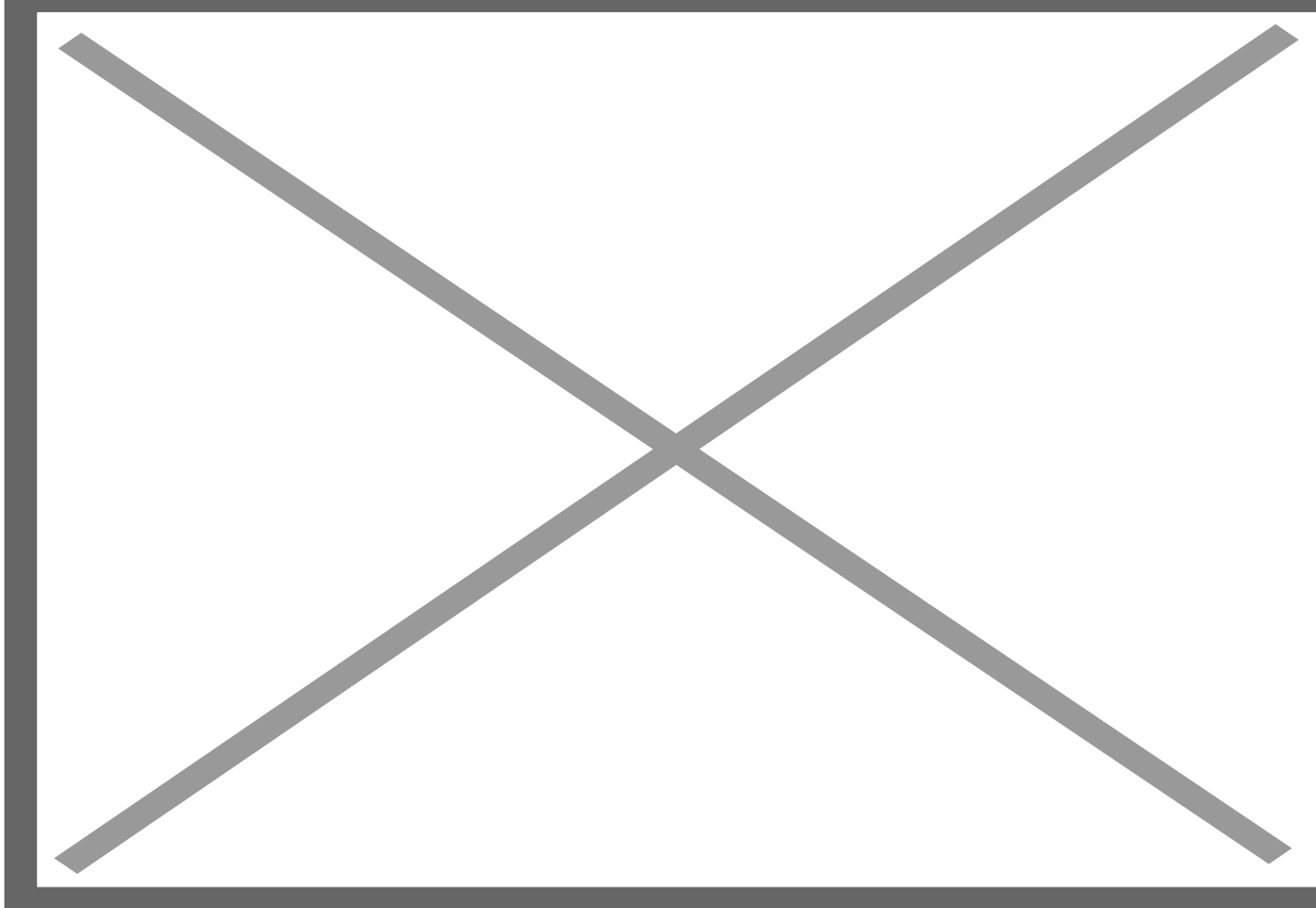
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World population growth projections. Credit: Max Roser

[For those that are gluten intolerant or sensitive](#), it's good for Lidl to help out in that respect.

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Credit: Lidl

That's the science speaking. [Eighty-four percent](#) of the residents of McLean have a bachelor's degree or higher and I would like to think that they might be somewhat familiar with the science. Let's encourage the price competition, particularly as after a 6% climb last year with the possibility that prices may go up by the [same amount](#) this year.

But let's encourage Lidl to do a little more research to inform their advertising.

Richard A. Williams, PhD, is an economist and author. He's the chairman of the board for the Center for Truth in Science and on the advisory board to the Institute for the Advancement of Food and Nutrition Sciences. He served as the Chief Social Scientist at the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition for 27 years. Visit [his website](#) and follow him on [LinkedIn](#)

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