

## Viewpoint: Anti-biotech advocacy group opposition to forest-restoring GM chestnut tree mimics their disingenuous rejection of nutrition-enhancing GM Golden Rice

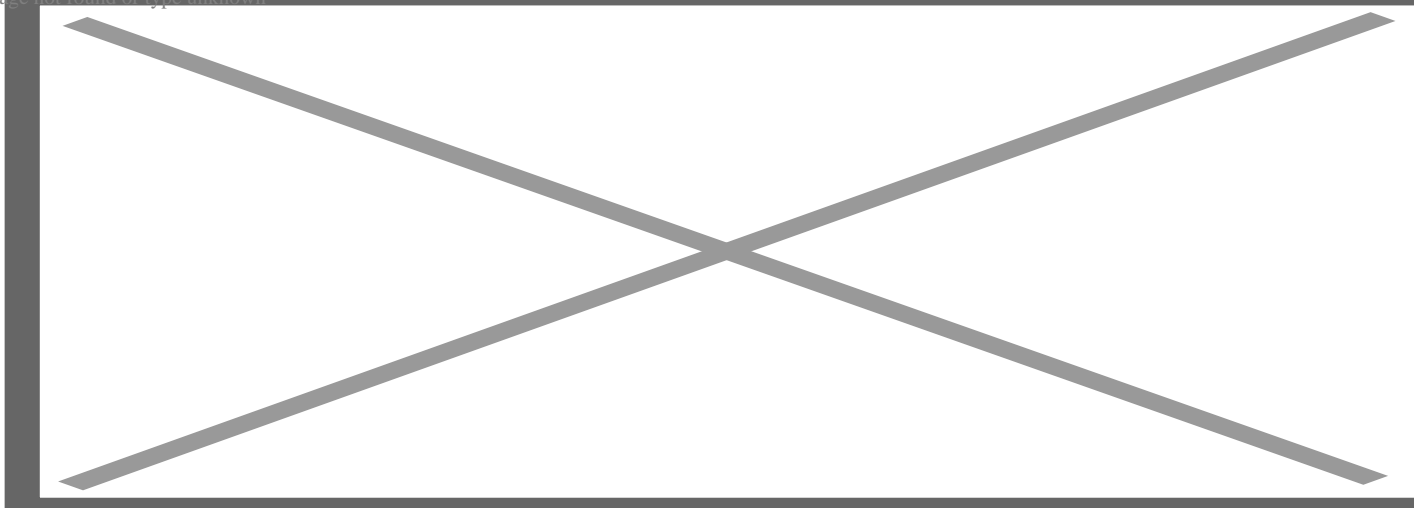
**C**ritics of scientists and science writers who speak plainly usually note it is better to be more neutral in tone, informational – ‘show them some slides.’

Yet very little actually gets done that way. A few places can stay in existence writing ‘the universe is mysterious’ articles but environmentalists know how to move the needle, financially, politically, and cultural. And it is not by being informational. Though their work is often hyperbole and misinformation around a kernel of scientific truth, they see positive results as the goal, not science.

They sometimes win by convincing scientists that no outreach should be done. Golden Rice, essentially a vitamin-fortified rice strain that can help prevent blindness in too many children to count, took the ‘listen to our opponents’ path. They believed that activists were *anti-corporate*, because that is what activists said, so they avoided the corporation.

The scientists behind Golden Rice bit on the false flag argument, the owner of the patent was happy to donate it, but because they are trying to be non-corporate environmental lawyers have attempted to block it at every turn, knowing that no company means no money and no lawyers.

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Credit: Springer

Golden Rice now knows activists are in a war of extinction against science.



Credit: PANAP

The American chestnut tree has faced the same hurdles. I wrote about how it would be a Genetically Rescued Organism in the Wall Street Journal in 2019, with a natural resistance to an invasive Asian fungus from another tree, and restore millions of trees.

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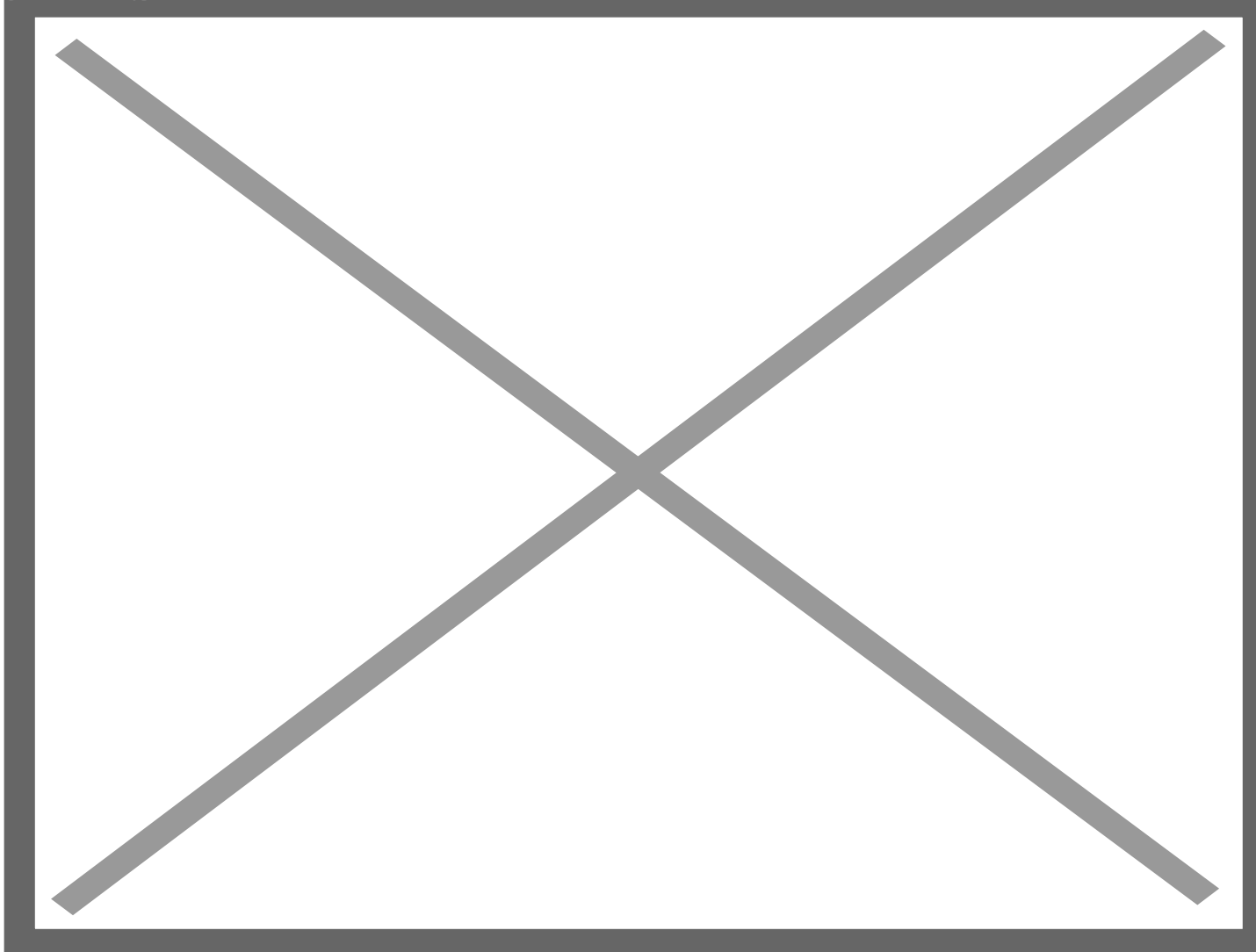
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During the comment period, USDA has thousands upon thousands of comments – in opposition. From activists who claim they support science, at least when it comes to doomsday scenarios like climate change. And now they have flipped to being for vaccines, a big pivot from even two years ago.

[A new set of proposed guidelines](#) wants to more like classical science outreach. They argue that negative framing is the norm, Greta Thunberg body shaming vaguely sketchy former MMA fighters and such, but inclusive education and positive action items help.

In the US, this is well-known that there is a schism between personal belief and behavior. Find a die-hard climate change denier and I will almost always show you it is someone who recycles and conserves electricity despite their distrust of the models. Find an anti-GMO activist, though, and they don't just argue the academics of it, they want it banned. And scientists who stand up for reason banned too. No evidence will change them.

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Credit: Twitter

Which means no amount of PSAs at the train station will make any difference for them in the way that counts – behavior.

It is certainly a worthy effort to think about ways to reach more people, but we also have to accept that some people are a lost cause.

**Hank Campbell founded Science 2.0 in 2006, and writes for USA Today, Wall Street Journal, CNN, and more. His first book, *Science Left Behind*, was the #1 bestseller on Amazon for environmental policy books. Follow Hank on Twitter [@HankCampbell](#)**

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