

GLP Podcast & Video: Synthetic biology makes \$10,000 perfume way cheaper; 'Fashionable organic fantasies' at the WEF; Sleeping pills cause dementia?



bottle of perfume used to cost more than \$10,000. The price has dropped precipitously thanks to advancements in synthetic biology, making a lot of fragrances available to many more consumers. The recent World Economic Forum (WEF) gathering in Davos proved to be a massive platform for “fashionable fantasies” about organic farming. A headline-grabbing study recently linked sleeping medication to dementia. But the research deserves much more scrutiny than it's received from the press.

Podcast:

Video:

Join geneticist Kevin Folta and GLP contributor Cameron English on episode 206 of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- [\\$10,500 for a bottle of perfume made with 8,000 flowers? Synthetic biology makes royal fragrances available at a fraction of that price](#)

Instead of harvesting thousands of petals from hundreds of plants to manufacture perfume, scientists can use the tools of synthetic biology to engineer microbes that produce identical fragrance ingredients much more sustainably. Applied beyond perfume to food ingredients, flavorings and medicines, these techniques are poised to yield an array of economic and environmental benefits. But this raises an important question: could consumer perceptions delay the progress of synthetic biology in the same way they slowed progress in crop biotechnology?

- [Viewpoint: 'Fashionable organic fantasies' — Global elite at Davos WEF convention endorsed failed agriculture policies amid global food crisis](#)

There is a clear consensus surrounding organic farming. Although there is nothing wrong with this form of agriculture, it simply cannot produce enough to meet the global demand for food today or in the future. Why, then, do so many economic and political elites continue to push governments around the world to mandate organic farming practices? It would seem that ideology trumps evidence more often than we'd like to admit.

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- **[Sleeping pills hasten dementia? Bogus study illustrates how correlation studies are often manipulated to reach a desired, ideological conclusion](#)**

A recent study captured popular attention for positing a link between commonly used sleeping medications and dementia. Some news stories helpfully explained the paper's limitations, though most press coverage simply repeated the study's conclusion without providing the necessary context. For now, there is little evidence indicating that a properly used sleeping medication contributes to dementia.

Listen to the podcast here: <https://tinyurl.com/33kj5wvh>

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