Viewpoint: Non-GMO seed company mistakenly listed a seed in its catalogue that had a similar name to a genetically-modified tomato — prompting a bizarre tirade against “Big Ag”

Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company had an intriguing offer in its 2024 catalog: a tomato seed it called Purple Galaxy. However, what the Missouri-based non-GMO seed supplier didn’t seem to realize is that the Purple Galaxy [had a similar name as] the purple genetically engineered tomato variety created by Norfolk Healthy Produce.

And, boy, was Baker Creek ticked off.

In a long Facebook post, Baker Creek got defensive of the product listing, suggesting that it had been hoodwinked because it had sourced the tomato seeds from “a plant breeder in Europe,” where the bar is particularly high for genetically engineered foods to be approved. Baker Creek also claims to have gotten the seeds tested at a respected lab in Europe. [In fact, Norfolk confirmed that it did develop the seeds in question.]

And all of that is fine — if a company such as Baker Creek wants to keep its business confined to organic and/or heirloom seeds, it certainly can. What got weird was the post’s unnecessary tirade against “Big Ag.”

There are two things to address here:

- The first is that the purple variety has been widely hailed as a positive addition to modern seed genetics, with feature articles in The New York Times, Forbes, and CNN, just to name a few. It is engineered to naturally produce higher levels of healthy antioxidants and better bridge the shelf-life gap among this popular produce.
- Secondly, Baker Creek has nearly 1 million Facebook followers. Sorry to break it to you, Baker Creek, but you are Big Ag too.

That second part is what makes the Facebook tirade such a head-scratcher.