It's that time of year again. Flowers are beginning to bloom, trees are turning green, the birds are chirping a little louder ... and the Environmental Working Group is scaring you about perfectly safe and healthy food.

Once again, the EWG has released its annual "Dirty Dozen," a list of fresh produce found in grocery stores all over America that EWG thinks is killing you. And like obliging lap dogs, the media -- as always, without fail, every single year -- reported the results of the "study" without even the slightest shred of criticism or critical thinking.

So, what is killing us this year? Strawberries are #1. Spinach is #2. Spinach! The upside is that if you're the sort of person who doesn't like spinach, now you can point to some pseudoscience that justifies your prejudice against this leafy green.

Why are strawberries, spinach, and 10 other nutritious fruits and vegetables killing us? Pesticides, those evil chemicals that farmers (both conventional and organic) spray on their crops to prevent weeds from choking them and insects from eating them.

Of course, the fact that organic farmers use pesticides doesn't prevent EWG from lying about it. The widespread belief that organic farmers don't use pesticides is perhaps the biggest myth about organic food. Yet, in their propaganda leaflet press release, Sonya Lunder said, "[F]or the items with the heaviest pesticide loads, we urge shoppers to buy organic."

It probably shouldn't come as a surprise that the EWG is heavily funded by the organic industry.
McKnight Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Turner Foundation and others. Our corporate partners for general support and events include but are not limited to: Organic Valley, Stonyfield Farms, Earthbound Farms, Applegate, Klean Kanteen, Dr. Bronner Soaps, Beauty Counter, Juice Beauty and Brown Advisory.

The EWG goes on to say, "The pesticide industry and chemical agriculture maintain that pesticides on produce are nothing to worry about, but doctors and scientists strongly disagree." That's another lie. Federal regulators monitor food safety very closely. In November 2016, the USDA wrote in a press release \[3\]:

\[...99\] percent of the samples tested had pesticide residues well below the residue levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and 15 percent had no detectable residue. Residues exceeding the tolerance were detected in 0.53 percent of the samples tested.

And just in case you’re still concerned, the USDA went on to say: "FDA and EPA are immediately notified if a [Pesticide Data Program] finding would pose a safety risk."

In other words, the EPA, USDA, and FDA all agree that our food supply is safe. The EWG disagrees with the scientific consensus, then bizarrely blames chemical companies and American farmers for lying to the public.

**What the EWG Should Be Doing**

Instead of scaring people, the EWG ought to focus on legitimate threats to our food supply, like foodborne outbreaks. Today, a Seattle school \[4\] announced its temporary closure due to a norovirus outbreak. According to the CDC \[5\], 48 million cases of food poisoning occur every year in the U.S., of which 3,000 prove fatal.

Think about that for a second. The equivalent of 9/11 -- 3,000 Americans -- die every single year because of microbes. Better food safety practices, such as irradiation, could drastically lower these numbers. Why isn't the EWG lobbying for that?

Because providing scientific solutions to actual problems isn't how fearmongers raise money.

**Notes**

(1) Sorry, I refuse to link to this.

(2) I refuse to link to this, too.

(3) The source of their money wouldn't matter if they actually told the truth and supported evidence-based food policy.