

NYT 'Greenmails' Ben & Jerry's, Teaches the Controversy on Glyphosate



By Alex Berezow, PhD — July 31, 2017



Credit: Ben & Jerry's/Wikipedia [1]

When it comes to food, biotech, and health reporting, the *New York Times* is at least consistent: It is guaranteed to be wrong every single time.

Recently, it ran a [very strange article](#) [2] about traces of glyphosate in Ben & Jerry's ice cream. It's strange for two reasons: (1) Ben & Jerry's is vehemently anti-GMO; and (2) It doesn't matter if there are traces of glyphosate in your ice cream.

Ben & Jerry's Gets 'Greenmailed'

Like Whole Foods, Ben & Jerry's has profited handsomely by scaring people about the safety of the food supply. The company is anti-GMO and supports GMO labeling. However, that unscientific, ideological position does not seem to be sufficient to pacify the more aggressive activists.

The NYT piece relied heavily on the testimony of organic food activists, like Ronnie Cummins and Carey Gillam, who have no scientific expertise. Instead, they are organic food lobbyists working for organizations such as the Organic Consumers Association and the anti-GMO group U.S. Right to Know. Interviewing them for a supposedly objective article on glyphosate would be like interviewing Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Jenny McCarthy for an article on vaccines. (Perhaps it's no coincidence that the Organic Consumers Association spreads [anti-vaccine nonsense on its website](#) [3], too, and [appears to have ties to the Russian propaganda outlet, RT](#) [4].)

So why would pro-organic activists be using a pro-organic newspaper to smear an anti-GMO ice cream company? That's almost inexplicable, but the article gives it away several paragraphs down:

The Organic Consumers Association has been working with an organization called Regeneration Vermont to persuade Ben & Jerry's to go organic.

Now, it makes sense. The Organic Consumers Association is "greenmailing" Ben & Jerry's. They will stop harassing Ben & Jerry's if the company goes fully organic. Dr. Kevin Folta reached a similar conclusion. He writes at the [Genetic Literacy Project](#) [5]: "[Ben & Jerry's] followed the lead of an anti-science movement, and it has come back to now hit them hard."

Dr. Folta concludes: "This was just a hit piece on a brand that failed to roll over on command, and now Ben and Jerry's is screwed because they can't rely on the science they opposed to push back." Indeed, the company has been hoisted by its own petard.

New York Times 'Teaches the Controversy' on Glyphosate

Let's set aside the shady ethics of the Organic Consumers Association and focus on the science. Should we worry about trace amounts of glyphosate in our food?

No. In 2017, because of extremely advanced and sensitive chemistry technology, we can detect trace levels of just about any chemical. That doesn't mean we should be scared of them. The article itself even agrees:

"[A] 75-pound child would have to consume 145,000 eight-ounce servings a day of Ben & Jerry's Chocolate Fudge Brownie ice cream to hit the [glyphosate] limit set by the Environmental Protection Agency."

Furthermore, scientists and government regulators are in unanimous consensus that glyphosate does not cause cancer. However, the journalist who wrote the story, Stephanie Strom, decided to "teach the controversy," instead. She cited by name a controversial organization (IARC) that believes a link between glyphosate and cancer exists, a link that has been explicitly rejected by far more prominent bodies -- such as the U.S. EPA, World Health Organization, and the European Food Safety Authority. The article does not mention that.

This is beyond irresponsible journalism. The *New York Times* is smearing a company at the request of an organic food lobby. Instead of behaving like skeptical journalists, the NYT acted like a PR firm. Such is the state of affairs at America's self-appointed newspaper of record*.

**Normally, I would be mocking Ben & Jerry's for being anti-GMO. But I defend companies from junk science attacks, even ones with which I disagree and don't patronize.*

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/31/nyt-greenmails-ben-jerrys-teaches-controversy-glyphosate-11633>

Links

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_%26amp;_Jerry#/media/File:Ben%26Jerrys-Coffee-Heath-Pint-Small.jpg
- [2] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/dining/ben-and-jerrys-ice-cream-herbicide-glyphosate.html?_r=0
- [3] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/no-historical-benefit-vaccines-polish-study>
- [4] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/05/02/dear-gary-ruskin-and-anti-gmoers-stop-being-puppets-putin-11225>
- [5] <https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2017/07/28/behind-ny-times-glyphosate-fiasco-anti-gmo-activists-turned-ben-jerrys/>