

Netflix Is The Last Place You'll Find A Pro-Science Documentary



By Hank Campbell — August 18, 2017



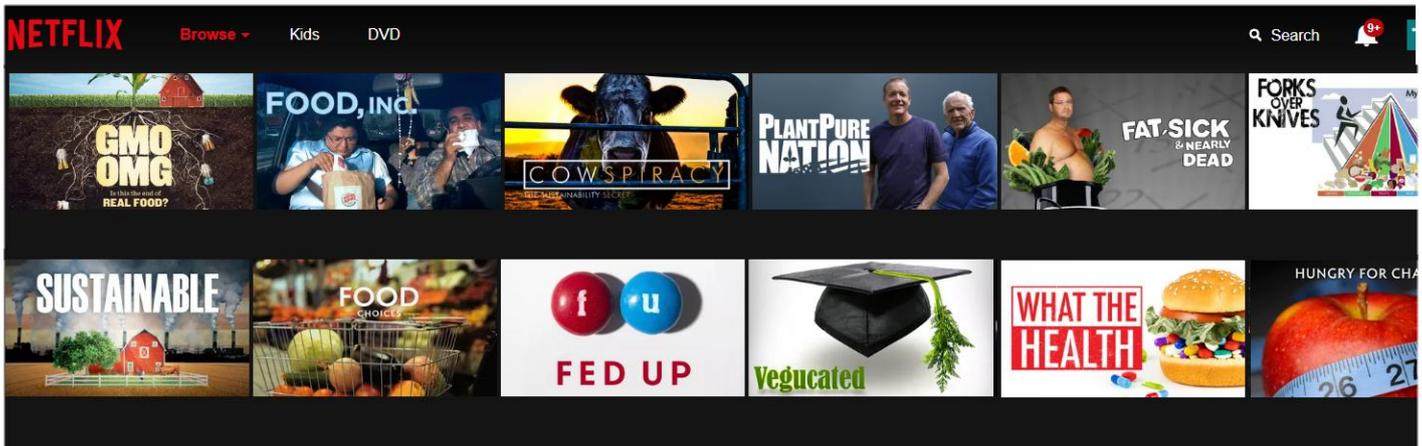
Netflix has declined to carry the agriculture documentary called "Food Evolution", for reasons they refused to specify. Like all documentaries, it is clearly a passion project so when disappointments like that happen, passions run high as well, and lots of speculation occurs among the fans. Some believe it's a conspiracy against science, that Netflix is politically aligned with the groups who make their money scaring people about food. (1) Others give them a pass and say science documentaries are probably just not a draw for their audience.

Is the Netflix audience not a science audience? Maybe not. In a poll of our office few people had it, which was a surprise to me. Netflix clearly dominates the home streaming market so they must know what they are doing, but they won't appeal to everyone. (2) They may have a business reason to not want to rock the boat among the environmentalists who subscribe. Their data mining may have shown that scientists do not 'vote' on science issues in film any more than they do in politics.(3) They may recognize that scientists who do have Netflix are not canceling it over unwillingness to accept a documentary - or even if the company features blatantly anti-science documentaries - while environmentalists aggressively use their billion dollars a year in revenue to mobilize people to call and email and create boycotts if a company endorses science they refuse to accept. Netflix may be playing the smart demographic odds and believe they have a lot to lose and nothing to gain by siding with anti-science people on food.

Still, I needed more than speculation so I did a search for food documentaries and I found that the people who believe Netflix doesn't care about food science are probably right. Every scary screed about dinner is on there but I wish you luck in finding a positive documentary if that is your appetite.

What if scientists watched food documentaries on Netflix?

But once we had the list of the scaremongering documentaries it made sense to ask our team to watch them and see what Netflix believes is a better fit for their audience than science is.



[1]

It turns out that it's probably better if few scientists use Netflix. It is painful to even read the blurbs on this stuff. I have been with Netflix since 1999 and a little piece of my affection for them died even doing this basic analysis.

But it gave us a chance to watch movies at work, so various smart people here picked whichever one they wanted and their thoughts are below.

GMO OMG - "Basically a 90 minute home video of Jeremy Seifert on a road trip where he takes every opportunity to make GMOs scary to his (admittedly adorable) kids. I have cute kids too, I can do without being emotionally manipulated by watching his play in a field of GMO corn bizarrely wearing haz-mat suits." - *Dr. Julianna LeMieux*

Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead - "Joe Cross' documentary should be titled "Factless, Slick, and Clearly Misled." I can get better health science from an episode of "Real Housewives of New Jersey." He weighed 320 pounds at age 40 so it's good he turned over a new (lettuce) leaf but the night before he started his "cleanse," he consumed 10 beers, two bottles of wine, a half a bottle of vodka, and "enough Chinese food for half of China" while smoking two packs of cigarettes. Stopping that had a lot more to do with his current health than what he calls "loving your plants." I bet Siggie Flicker knows better too." - *Dr. Josh Bloom*

Sustainable - "The film offers the usual buzz about 'natural, local farming' beating the odds against Big Ag... farmer Marty meets Chef, Chef buys local produce, and everyone feels good about serving natural ingredients... but no one really answers the question, How is Marty going to feed billions around the world?" - *Ana Dolaskie*

Wheat: "Your basic compilation of any and all possible lies, half-truths and myths about how wheat must be the source of all human ills. All you really need to know to understand the fringe nature of this film is that Nobel Laureate Dr. Norm Borlaug, the father of the Green Revolution and the man who prevented more starvation than any other person in history, is dismissed as "working for the corn and wheat board" — whatever that is. The folks who made this movie had too much leisure time and they abused it. Then they abused my time when I watched it." - *Dr. Ruth Kava*

Cowspiracy: "90 minutes about a young man's quest to uncover what scientists, environmentalists *and* the government don't want you to know - that animal agriculture has a carbon footprint. You know you're on the fringe when even Greenpeace refuses to meet with you. In attempting to create more vegans he steps in a big cow flop - a smart person has to instead conclude that GMOs are the only way to go. Anything else is non-sustainable." - *Dr. Lila Abassi*

Food Matters: "This has to be the worst documentary I've ever seen. It starts with a conspiracy theory -- that doctors don't understand nutrition and only want to cure people with pills -- and goes downhill from there. They claim that the "sickness industry" (medical doctors, conventional farmers, and agricultural companies) makes money by keeping people sick. Heart disease and cancer? Your food is poisoning you. If Fox Mulder made a movie about food, this would be it. You can learn more about actual food and nutrition science by watching Gordon Ramsay shout the F word at his cooks on television." - *Dr. Alex Berezow*

Forks over Knives: "The plot is simple, plants are more natural and healthy than animals, shot in a style reminiscent of a mid-century documentary, a simpler time with simpler science - you know, when the preparation for a nuclear war was to get under your desk. My favorite factoid was that the Japanese diet of rice and fish reduces prostate cancer. They left out that the same diet resulted in a much higher incidence of stomach cancer, which is far more deadly. Because it invokes the nostalgic feel of 1950s documentaries, it might be interesting for a film enthusiast, but it's useless for those searching for unbiased health and nutrition information." - *Dr. Chuck Dinerstein*

We couldn't watch them all, debunking junk science, chemophobia and alternative medicine is a full-time job, but that Netflix will carry even a dozen of these and not have any interest in a pro-science food documentary tells us that, like in fundraising, the big money is on the denier side.

If you saw other documentaries, however, and have your own review, please share it in the comments.

NOTES:

(1) Such as Organic Consumers Association and their vassal sites, like US Right To Know, a corporate front group they created. Center for Food Safety looks especially bad because they brag that they are litigators blocking progress rather than caring about food or the public.

(2) Unless you look at the \$20 billion in debt on their balance sheet.

(3) Unlike Hispanics or cops, who vote on issues that directly affect them, scientists don't do that despite being a \$120 billion constituency. The previous administration didn't care about the NIH or NSF but academics still overwhelmingly still voted Democrat while private sector scientists

nominally voted Republican. [As I wrote in USA Today](#) [2], during the "sequester", which we were told was going to kill science in America, the President exempted more servants in the White House from furlough than he did employees at the entire National Science Foundation. He canceled the Smithsonian panda cam too.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/08/18/netflix-last-place-youll-find-pro-science-documentary-11697>

Links

[1] <https://www.acsh.org/sites/default/files/Netflix%20Science.jpg>

[2] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/10/15/obama-shutdown-science-nsf-column/2990033/>