

'Undark' Joins the Dark Side on GMOs



By Alex Berezow — November 29, 2017



Greenpeace celebrates illiteracy

Good science journalism is hard to find. In a world of fake news, the public needs trusted guides to help them understand complex issues.

The website Undark, whose stated [mission](#) [1] is "true journalistic coverage of the sciences" seems a promising venue. Its editorial staff and advisory board contain some fairly well-known and respectable names.

That's what makes the website's publication of a [Monsanto conspiracy article](#) [2] so troubling and, quite frankly, bizarre. The piece, written by Carey Gillam, deploys distortions and half-truths early and often. Literally, the very first sentence is a lie.

"As an invited expert..."

Let's stop right there. Ms. Gillam is no more an expert in agricultural science and technology than I am in the cultural significance of plastic flamingo lawn ornaments. According to her LinkedIn profile, she has no formal education in science, yet claims to be an "expert" on GMOs and agrochemicals because she used to write about them for Reuters.

Now, she works for an avowedly anti-biotechnology organization called U.S. Right to Know, whose mission is to label GMOs with the ultimate intention of purging them from the food supply. Their primary benefactor is the organic food industry, specifically the Organic Consumers Association, which also [publishes anti-vaccine propaganda](#) [3].

Curiously, Undark fails to disclose Ms. Gillam's financial tie to the organic food industry, despite its

dedication to "true journalistic coverage of the sciences."

"The company and chemical industry allies have long asserted its safety, but many independent scientists disagree."

This is a lie by omission. Regulators, not just so-called "chemical industry allies," have concluded that glyphosate is safe. The list of regulators that believe glyphosate is safe for agricultural use includes the [World Health Organization](#) [4], the [U.S. EPA](#) [5], and the [European Food Safety Authority](#) [6].

The only organization that disagreed is IARC, a fringe group within the WHO that also believes that bacon and hot water will give you cancer. Recently, [IARC was caught doctoring scientific evidence](#) [7], twisting the conclusions of papers to support its preordained conclusion. Worse, an IARC advisor received \$160,000 from trial lawyers who were eager to sue any company that made glyphosate.

Did Undark mention that? Nope.

Ms. Gillam's entire case against glyphosate rests on the "Monsanto papers," which suggest that some glyphosate literature might have been ghostwritten by Monsanto. Smoking gun, right? Not exactly. According to the [European Food Safety Authority](#) [8]:

"EFSA can confirm that even if the allegations regarding ghostwriting proved to be true, there would be no impact on the overall assessment as presented in the EFSA Conclusion on glyphosate."

In other words, the evidence vindicating glyphosate is so overwhelming, that the "Monsanto papers" didn't matter. Did Undark present that side of the story? Of course not.

The bottom line is that this article is anti-science propaganda on a website purportedly about rigorous science journalism, written by an environmental activist with no relevant academic credentials. I contacted Deborah Blum, the publisher of Undark, for comment. She refused to respond. Perhaps that is understandable, given that there is no reasonable justification for this dumpster fire.

[Undark's editorial team](#) [1] should be ashamed of its complete dereliction of scientific and journalistic duty. They have forever stained the credibility of the website. The only remedy is a full retraction, an apology, and most importantly, an explanation.

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Links

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