

'Attn:' Video Spreads Lies About Processed Food in America, Europe



By Alex Berezow — March 28, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

"Attn:" is an activist website that produces extremely popular videos, some of which feature the esteemed scientist (all actors consider themselves scientists) Zooey Deschanel. And like most activist websites, truth comes in a distant second place to eyeballs.

One video making the rounds on Facebook is titled, "[Processed Food in America vs. Europe](#) [2]." The video pushes the old trope that Europeans eat food hand-picked from the Garden of the Gods, while Americans eat slop filled with dangerous chemicals. So far, it's received 62 million views.

The lies come early and often. Let's break them down:

"Processed food contains chemicals that are illegal in Europe."

That statement is so vague, it's meaningless. The definition of "processed" itself is so vague, that it's meaningless. If food has been washed before it was put into a bag, that's considered "processed." If you buy pre-sliced apples, those apples have been "processed." Was your raw goat milk refrigerated at some point? Yep, it was "processed."

According to the [Institute of Food Technologists](#) [3], "processing" could include: "washing, grinding, mixing, cooling, storing, heating, freezing, filtering, fermenting, extracting, extruding, centrifuging, frying, drying, concentrating, pressurizing, irradiating, microwaving, and packaging." Basically, that means every food has been "processed" to some extent before it arrives in your mouth.

"Mountain Dew and Fanta literally contain flame retardants."

There are multiple lies here. First, Fanta can be purchased in Europe, so this statement contradicts their previous statement. I remember seeing it everywhere in Paris when I first visited in 2004¹. Second, the "flame retardant" they are referring to, brominated vegetable oil (BVO), has been [removed from Fanta](#) [4]. Third, BSEF, a trade group that represents companies that manufacture brominated flame retardants, says that [BVO isn't a flame retardant](#) [5] and isn't marketed as one².

"The same additive found in Pop-Tarts is also used in antifreeze."

True. It's called propylene glycol. But, so what? Some chemicals have multiple uses. Water can quench your thirst, and it can be used to put out a fire. (Uh-oh, is water a flame retardant?!) It's worth noting just how commonly used this chemical is. The CDC [writes](#) [6] that it is safe and "used by the chemical, food, and pharmaceutical industries as an antifreeze." Additionally:

"It is used to absorb extra water and maintain moisture in certain medicines, cosmetics, or food products. It is a solvent for food colors and flavors, and in the paint and plastics industries. Propylene glycol is also used to create artificial smoke or fog used in fire-fighting training and in theatrical productions."

The Attn: propaganda video goes on:

These ingredients have been linked to: growth problems, organ damage, birth defects, seizures, schizophrenia.

We can't live without water, but too much of it will kill you. We can't live without oxygen, but too much of it will damage your lungs. The dose makes the poison. That's the #1 principle of toxicology.

But the video casts doubt not only on this fundamental tenet of toxicology but on the scientific integrity of the FDA. It then touts the benefits of the precautionary principle in Europe, which essentially means that Europeans assume every single chemical is deadly unless it can be proven safe. Since science can never definitively prove that something is 100% safe, that's a ridiculous

standard, but it's enshrined in the EU's constitution.

62 million people saw that video. That's the scope of the problem actual science communicators are facing. It's tough to beat Zooney Deschanel³.

Notes

(1) It's disgusting.

(2) So what does BVO do? It's an [emulsifier](#) ^[7] that helps spread flavor evenly in a drink.

(3) Zooney Deschanel isn't in this video, but she features in other propaganda videos that promote consumption of locally grown organic food.

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Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/03/27/attn-video-spreads-lies-about-processed-food-america-europe-12766>

Links

[1] <https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/a-young-woman-holding-a-glass-of-red-wine-selective-color-with-emphasis-on-the-red-wine-by1lj2oahoiskjy489>

[2] <https://www.attn.com/videos/14445/processed-food-america-vs-europe>

[3] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1541-4337.2010.00127.x>

[4] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-beverages-coke-bvo/coke-to-remove-controversial-chemical-from-fanta-other-drinks-idUSKBN0DL17L20140505>

[5] <http://bsef.com/news/clarification-regarding-articles-stating-that-brominated-vegetable-oil-is-a-flame-retardant/>

[6] <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/PHS/PHS.asp?id=1120&tid=240>

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brominated_vegetable_oil