Fishy business, continued

By ACSH Staff — August 4, 2011

In June, the U.S. House of Representatives caving to the demands of several colleagues from salmon-producing states voted to prohibit the FDA from investigating the benefits and risks of allowing genetically modified Aquabounty salmon onto the market. As we noted [1] at the time, the detractors argued despite evidence to the contrary that the GM fish would decimate wild salmon populations and cause allergies in humans. Whatever the scientific basis for those fears may have been, first the House, and now the Senate, feels the need to interrupt that inquiry, using bogus health concerns.

Recently, eight senators threatened legislation that would prevent the FDA from using any of its funding for further study of the safety of GM salmon for the environment and for consumers. As a recent Los Angeles Times editorial [2] points out, the reaction of these senators is willful ignorance: People tend to respect and believe in science until it tells them something they didn’t want to hear. And, quite clearly, these senators don’t wish to be inconvenienced should further studies confirm preliminary findings that the salmon pose few risks.

The L.A. Times makes the quite reasonable point that, whatever one is predisposed to believe about the genetically engineered salmon, such beliefs aren’t tenable without solid research to support it. ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross agrees. The whole thing, he says, is an egregious example of a federal legislative body impeding scientific progress out of concern not for public health or the environment but, rather, for its own commercial interests.

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