

# Hope for malnourished kids threatened by anti-GMO zealots

By ACSH Staff — August 22, 2013



<sup>[1]</sup>According to the [World Health Organization](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, approximately 250

million preschool children worldwide suffer from vitamin A deficiency. WHO estimates that a quarter to a half a million of these children become blind every year because of this deficiency, and of those half die within a year of losing their sight. Moreover, low levels of vitamin A and its precursors are known to impair immune responses to various microorganisms, increasing the toll of contagious diseases among those populations.

In the face of such horrendous statistics, one might think that every effort to improve vulnerable children's vitamin status would receive support from all quarters. Unfortunately that doesn't happen.

Apparently acting under the mantra, We must kill them to save them, anti-GMO ideologues destroyed trial plots of so-called Golden Rice in the Philippines. Golden Rice has been genetically engineered with genes that allow it to produce beta-carotene, a substance the human body can use to form vitamin A. If this rice is consumed instead of the typical white rice that is a staple food in much of Asia, it could go far to ameliorate the vitamin A deficiency that threatens so many young children.

In the Philippines, agronomists were testing varieties of Golden Rice to find types that would grow best in various climates. It was test plots of these trials that were destroyed by anti-GMO vandals.

One reason some activists are against GMO foods is that they say that they believe the benefits go largely to multinational corporations. However, this is certainly not true of Golden Rice. Indeed, scientists who developed the beta-carotene-containing grain, led by Dr. Ingo Potrykus of the International Rice Research Institute, were allowed access to the necessary information without paying. Further, the nonprofit Rockefeller Foundation supported their efforts.

Another issue the biotech-food terrorists exploit is a baseless fear of GMO foods. They try to frighten the public about nonexistent toxicities of biotech products. The truth is that such genetically engineered grains are perfectly safe for human consumption, and anti-GMO activists are simply scaremongering when they question that fact.

Scientists are standing up to protest the destruction of these crops in the Philippines: A [petition](#) [3] to the activists has garnered thousands of signatures of scientists and other supporters. ACSH staffers have signed on and we encourage all readers to click on this [link](#) [3] and add their support.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava was amazed by this terrorism, stating It's unbelievable that people would destroy a means of bringing hope and health to thousands, if not millions, of children worldwide. In my opinion this vandalism is tantamount to murder!

ACSH's Director of Video Production Ana Simovska spoke with Dr. Channa Prakash, one of the authors of the petition, about their efforts. (Two of the other authors, Drs. Martina McGlouglin and Bruce Chassy, are co-authors of ACSH's soon-to-be-released tome, Agricultural Biotechnology). You can watch the interview [here](#).

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**Links**

[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/166780626.jpg>

[2] <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/vad/en/>

[3] <http://www.change.org/petitions/global-scientific-community-condemns-the-recent-destruction-of-field-trials-of-golden-rice-in-the-philippines>