A doubleheader of GMO stupidity From the two most populous countries in the world.

By ACSH Staff — August 25, 2014

Two recent stories may have rendered the old saw, one step forward, two steps backwards obsolete. And not by a little.

In fact, it would not be incorrect to adjust the numbers a bit. Such as: one step forward, two-and-a-half billion steps back, because this is the combined population of China and India two of the places where significantly more food will be required to feed their rapidly-growing countries. Together, they comprise 36 percent of the earth's population.

In a sane world, one would think that countries with such enormous food requirements might embrace technology that greatly increases crop production, in spite of poor growing conditions (insects, drought) yet, it is China and India where a good deal of the resistance lies. Should this mindset continue, it does not take much imagination to see what will happen: Massive preventable starvation. And for no good reason whatsoever.

Whatever is going on in China defies logic. Last week, China's Ministry of Agriculture took a very sharp U-turn in their agricultural policy, as reported in Science Magazine [1], deciding not to renew biosafety certificates which would allow research groups to grow GM rice and corn. The profound change in their policy is especially perplexing, since as early as 2009 they formed an initiative to encourage GM research, especially with corn and rice to a lesser degree.

Needless to say, there was no shortage of scientists that were none too pleased about the change in the Chinese policy.

One of these is Cong Cao, an associate professor at the University of Nottingham in the Great Britain, who spoke with RT (Russian TV a huge internet-based news service) and was quite scathing in his reaction [2]to the decision. Writing in The Conversation journal, he said the move signals a major blow to the fight to establish GM food in China.
But what is going on in India may be worse. Michael Specter, in the August 25th issue of *The New Yorker* wrote a long, infuriating piece entitled *The Problem with G.M.O. Labels* (sub-titled, *Seeds of Doubt*). Specter, who is generally regarded as fair and sensible picked a topic, where rational discussion is just about impossible.

For example, Specter says: [Vandana] Shiva and her allies talk constantly about dangers of G.M.O.s that are not supported by facts.

And G.M.O. labels may be a political necessity, but they make no scientific sense. Most of the legislation that has been proposed would require a label that says something like produced with genetic engineering.

So far, so good, but unfortunately, the topic of his piece is an Indian celebrity anti-GMO activist named Vandana Shiva, and any readers who might have been expecting even a shred of fairness, balance, and decent science should skip this piece. It will only give you a stomach ache.

ACSH’s Dr. Bloom, rarely at a loss for words, found it quite a challenge to summarize Shiva’s *POV*. He says, “There is so much wrong on so many levels, that I don’t even know where to start. So, here are a few examples of some of her wisdom.

- There are two trends... One: a trend of diversity, democracy, freedom, joy, culture people celebrating their lives...And the other: monocultures, deadness. Everyone depressed. Everyone on Prozac. More and more young people unemployed. We don’t want that world of death.... We would have no hunger in the world if the seed was in the hands of the farmers and gardeners and the land was in the hands of the farmers... They want to take that away.
- G.M.O. stands for God, Move Over, we are the creators now.
- That question’s [the increase in autism] If you look at the graph of the growth of G.M.Os, the growth of application of glyphosate and autism, it’s literally a one-to-one correspondence. And you could make that graph for kidney failure, you could make that graph for diabetes, you could make that graph even for Alzheimer’s.

Dr. Bloom notes, EVERYTHING she said in that last paragraph is wrong, or at best, unproven, and the premise itself is embarrassingly amateurish. Anyone with an IQ over 75 and even the most elementary comprehension of cause and effect will be able to pick up this garbage immediately. There are dozens of examples of nonsensical correlations on the Internet. One of them shows a perfect correlation [3] between the number of babies named Ava and the housing bubble.

He continues, One thing notably absent from the article was any mention of how new varieties of crops were made in the 20th century, and even earlier by exposure of seeds to nuclear radiation or very toxic mutagenic (and sometimes carcinogenic) chemicals to disrupt the DNA of the old plant. This is the essence of breeding. Perhaps if people realized what they’ve been eating (safely) for their entire lives, they would understand that GM is nothing more than a scientifically precise way to do this not some evil plan to rule the world.
The New Yorker piece is both an embarrassment and a vehicle that gives tremendous exposure to a very dangerous woman. If you want to subject yourself to the literary equivalent of bamboo under the fingernails, you can read the whole article here [4].

You better have a strong stomach. Much stronger than you’ll ever need to eat a GM food.


Links