

# NGOs Are Spreading Lies About GMOs

By *Nicholas Staropoli* — July 20, 2015

Today, July 20th, 2015 marks the 46th anniversary of the first manned mission to the moon. For most, it commemorates an amazing achievement that blended innovation, American ingenuity and



most importantly science.

[But for 22 million Americans](#) [1],

that event was one of the greatest lies science has ever told.

Distrust of science is running rampant in our society. For proof, look no further than a recent [Pew Research Center Study](#) [2] that highlighted just how far apart scientific opinion is from the views of Americans on a variety of science issues. There is a 40 point difference in opinion on the safety of pesticides between scientists, who overwhelmingly assert they re safe, and the average American. Similar large gaps in opinion exist on issues like animal research, vaccines and evolution. But the biggest gap, at 51 points, is on the safety of genetically modified foods.

How did the public stray so far from science on this issue that more than half of Americans believe GMOs are unsafe to eat?

There will be many answers and opinions on this question, however, one of the main culprits that has been driving a wedge between the public and scientists on GMO safety has been Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). [These include groups](#) [3] including Consumer Reports, Friends of Earth, Green Peace, Organic Consumers Association, and others are all very vocal about their anti-GMO stance.

What makes these groups particularly dangerous is the amount of trust people put in NGOs. According to a report by Edelman, [63 percent of people trust NGOs](#) [4], the highest level of trust for any institution (others include media, government and businesses). This is how GreenPeace gets away with complete [lies printed on its website](#) [5] like this: *Giant agribusiness firms insist that GMO crops are not harmful to humans...But scientists know we simply don't have enough evidence to make that claim.*

NGOs may hold the public's trust because there is a perceived lack of conflict of interest. Governments are run by politicians that are perceived to be controlled by political donations, while businesses and often media outlets are run by profits and bottom line thinking which corrupts their dealings.

For many people the question is framed like this: who do you trust -- Monsanto or GreenPeace? The former is seen as an evil seed and greedy chemical company the latter is seen as a benevolent protector of the environment.

But these perceptions are not based in fact. Quite the opposite. GMOs and pesticides are safe for you to consume and GreenPeace [has been known to destroy the land](#) [6] they swear they protect. In some places, GreenPeace is such a threat to the study of agriculture, more money is spent on protecting the land *from* [GreenPeace and other similar groups than](#) [7] is spent conducting the science.

Fortunately, there is another side to this coin. Many prominent, respected NGOs support the safety of GMOs: The American Medical Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The National Academy of Science, The Royal Society of Medicine, and The World Health Organization, just to name a few. Their opinions are well respected by the public on most issues, except for when they voice their support for GMOs -- then all of a sudden [their motivations are called into question](#) [8].

So why do people trust one set of groups over the other? It probably has nothing to do with the identity of the NGOs and more to do with how effective fear-mongering and conspiracy theories are influencing popular opinion. An independent scientist who asserts GMOs are safe is seen as *having something to hide*. However, when the [Organic Consumers Association says](#) [9] GMOs can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts, they are seen as exposing the truth. Just like with the moon landing, the evil government is trying to cover it up while the heroes on the message boards are out there on the front lines exposing the conspiracy.

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**Links**

[1] <http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/04/conspiracy-theory-poll-results-.html>

[2] <http://www.pewinternet.org/interactives/public-scientists-opinion-gap/>

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/jul/16/ngos-nonprofits-gmos-genetically-modified-foods-biotech?source=acsh.org>

[4] <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2015/01/20/trust-in-business-media-and-ngos-is-going-down-everywhere/>

[5] <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/sustainable-agriculture/issues/gmos/>

[6]

[http://www.slate.com/blogs/future\\_tense/2013/08/26/golden\\_rice\\_attack\\_in\\_philippines\\_anti\\_gmo\\_activists\\_lie\\_about\\_p](http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2013/08/26/golden_rice_attack_in_philippines_anti_gmo_activists_lie_about_p)

[7] <http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/07/02/uk-gm-wheat-trial-highlights-costs-of-violent-activism/>

[8] <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/06/the-amas-strange-position-on-gm-foods-test-but-dont-label/258968/>

[9] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/categories/genetic-engineering>