

Coca Cola Shareholder Meeting Question
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I'm Justin Danhof of the National Center for Public Policy Research, a free-market think-tank and company shareholder.

Representatives from my organization have spoken with the CEOs of many different food and beverage companies about the issue of genetically modified foods. Generally, we have been discouraged by the food industry's tepid response to anti-GMO activists and politicians. Some corporate leaders have told us that other companies should educate consumers about the safety and promise of GMOs. Others have expressed that this duty should fall to the federal government. The food and beverage industry seems to lack true leadership in organizing a broad-based campaign to inform the American public about the scientific safety and potential of GM ingredients.

Despite the fact that GMOs are mainstream agriculture, GMOs feed people more efficiently, GMO crops are more environment-friendly than conventional crops and numerous scientific bodies have determined that GMO foods are safe – including the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Medical Association, the Royal Society of Medicine and the World Health Organization, progressive activists still attack companies such as Coca-Cola for using GMOs in some of its products.

Last year, *Scientific American* reported that the delayed application of Vitamin A-enhanced Golden Rice thanks to controversies stirred by anti-GMO activists had cost over 1.4 million life years in India alone since 2002. This is real human suffering and death. And it is children who too often suffer the most.

The anti-GMO attacks come from Americans who have likely never missed a meal in their lives. Their campaign against GMOs is unscientific, fear-based and inhumane, but they are winning. In fact, one ABC News poll showed that 93 percent of Americans think the federal government should mandate GMO labeling – a tactic they hope will elevate GMOs with taboo products such as tobacco and alcohol.

As one of the most recognizable brands in the world, Coca-Cola has an opportunity, and indeed a duty, to do more to bridge the GMO information gap and educate consumers about the safety of GM products. Corporate reticence is an unnecessary roadblock in this debate.

For example, at the request of liberal activists, many retailers such as Kroger, Target, Safeway, Trader Joe's and others have agreed to boycott GM salmon in advance of any FDA decision on whether it will come to market.

Furthermore, when my organization submitted a shareholder proposal to McDonald's asking that the company do more to educate American consumers about GMOs, its board opposed the measure stating, "educational efforts and reporting in this regard should be the responsibility of scientific, regulatory and government agencies." That's pathetic and serves as fodder for the anti-GMO crowd. McDonald's serves Coca-Cola beverages. McDonald's tepidness extends to you.

So my question is this: would you consider making your company's health scientists, nutrition specialists and you yourself, Mr. Kent, available to the American and international media to combat the unscientific activists and stand up for the promise of GMOs?

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