

Question at Monsanto Shareholder Meeting January 28, 2014

I'm Justin Danhof, Free Enterprise Project Director at the National Center for Public Policy Research. Today I am representing my colleague at the National Center, Amy Ridenour, who is a Monsanto shareholder.

My question has to do with public relations, and, more specifically, the company's difficulties with a relatively small number of fanatic activists who seem to feel threatened by the tremendous promise of GMOs for feeding those in the Third World who suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

The Company's defense of its products is so weak that in one poll at least, 91 percent of Americans supported GMO labeling. GMO opponents have run a junk science campaign based on fear, but it has been effective in large part due to the Company's unwillingness to match the other side's presence in the public policy debate concerning GMOs.

Our think-tank, which is a lot smaller than Monsanto, had 1,738 radio and television interviews last year. We talk about public policy issues and, on radio, take questions from callers. A lot of education gets done.

My question: Would you consider asking Monsanto scientists – not all of them, just the ones with an interest who would be good at it – to go on talk radio shows, across the country, not just in places with labeling debates, explain the issues and take questions from the public?

Your critics want transparency. What could be more transparent than actual Monsanto scientists interacting with the public?

Of course we do know the activists won't be satisfied, but let them try then to convince people who have heard personable, intelligent, clearly well-meaning scientists on the air taking all questions and having reasonable answers that GMOs are dangerous.

This won't solve every PR challenge the company has, but it could be a big help. What do you think?

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