

**Transcript of National Center for Public Policy Research Q&A with Monsanto
CEO Hugh Grant
Monsanto Shareholder Meeting
January 28, 2014**

Danhof:

Hi, one again, I'm Justin Danhof and I direct the Free Enterprise Project at the National Center for Public Policy Research, and I'm representing my co-worker Amy Ridenour — a Monsanto shareholder.

Earlier in the meeting, Mr. Grant, you kind of expressed apologies for lack of communication in the past. And my question is directed at that issue. Specifically, public relations and the company's difficulties with a small number of activists who seem really 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 in the past have been so weak that multiple polls show that more than 90 percent of Americans support mandatory GMO labeling. GMO opponents have brought, in my opinion, a junk science campaign based solely on fear. But it has been effective, in large part due to the company's unwillingness to mask the other side's presence in the public policy debate concerning GMOs.

My small think-tank, which is a whole lot smaller than Monsanto, we conducted over 1,700 radio and television interviews just last year. We talked public policy issues. And, on radio, we take questions from the American public on a wide range of issues. A lot of education gets accomplished this way.

My question is, would you consider asking some of your scientists here, not all of them, just the ones with an interest in doing so, to go on talk radio, to go television across the country? Not just the ones with labeling debates, but all across the country, and explain the issues to them. Take questions from the public.

Your critics — they want transparency. What could be more transparent than actual Monsanto scientists interacting with the public in this way?

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

This won't solve every PR challenge that the company has, but I think it could be a big help. So, what do you think about that idea?

Grant:

I um, I think it's a really good idea. Thank you.

[Audience Laughs]

I think your point's well taken. And the point I made earlier — in the apology I made earlier — was the recognition that, for a long time, we focused on our grower customer and the communication of these technologies to the grower customer.

We never really saw ourselves as part of that food chain. We plant a seed that somebody grows and harvests, and somebody else collects and processes. But somebody else might process after that. It was conducted in the food stuff, branded and put in a box, that somebody else puts on a supermarket shelf.

In our view, or my view, of this has been for a long time [that] we are the front end of that channel, but we are not the channel.

And I think, to your point, it is well taken. There is more that we can do. And, in the last year, particularly since last summer, we've been much more active in that engagement and talking in venues. You make the point on radio, and I'm one of those people who still loves to listen to radio. But engage in that dialogue in that conversation in venues that we haven't traditionally shown up in.

Our scientists — and, frankly, for scientists — this is a new gig. Because scientists deal in facts, and they deal in absolutes and as close to absolute as you can. And we have been spending a lot of time inside the company talking about how we communicate, and how great scientists also need to increasingly need to be great communicators.

Our lead scientist, and I'm sure you recognize the laureate, the winner, or one of the winners, of the World Food Prize this last year is one of our most successful communicators. Both in talks with the growers and increasingly to broader society, and that is Dr. [Robert] Fraley. But I think there is a recognition we need to do more, and we have facts to convey and a story to tell. And we need to do a better job in doing that.

The last point I'd make and [it has to do with when] I was in Europe last week. It's really interesting because, when you meet leaders in Africa — who for so long have watched Europe and read the *Times*, or watched France and read *Le Soir* — they're reaching the point where they're making their own decisions. And I was very impressed last week on a pro-science stance, an impatience, and also a press — in the same way that you press — that we should be more direct and much more vocal on a broader base on how we communicate the benefits of these technologies.

So, coaching accepted. Thank you.