



National Press Club address: who is Jon Entine?

8th September 2015

Jon Entine will address the National Press Club this Wednesday. He holds a variety of positions that have links to the chemical, fossil fuel, processed food and GM seed industries including:

- **Senior Fellow of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Literacy at the University of California.** IFAL was created by the World Food Centre, which is funded by confectionary company Mars and the University of California. [\[i\]](#)UC receives funding from corporations including Monsanto, Novartis (now Syngenta) and Seminis Seeds (owned by Monsanto)[\[ii\]](#)
- **Senior Fellow at the Center for Health & Risk Communication at George Mason University.**[\[iv\]](#) The University receives a large amount of funding from the Koch brothers who are oil billionaires that support climate change denial. [\[v\]](#)
- **Founder of ESG MediaMetrics**, which 'provides 'media strategy, writing, speechwriting, and engagement with critics' for clients, especially at times of 'intense media or government scrutiny - or to head off unfair attacks,' according to its website. Current and past clients include Monsanto, the Vinyl Institute trade group and the natural gas company NiSource.' [\[vi\]](#)
- **Executive Director of the Genetic Literacy Project.** The Genetic Literacy Project is part of the Science Literacy Project, an independent 501c3 funded by grants from non-partisan foundations.' It is unclear who the Science Literacy Project is and which foundations support it. [\[vii\]](#)Previously the Project was housed at George Mason University, (see above for details).
- **Fellow of the American Enterprise Institute**[\[viii\]](#), a think tank which does not disclose its funders. [\[ix\]](#)These are known to include the Koch brothers, Kraft and General Mills Foundation. They have opposed minimum wage rises, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform, supported 'regime change' in Iraq and cast doubt on global warming. [\[x\]](#)
- **Author of:**
 - **'Pension Fund Politics: the dangers of socially responsible investing'**
 - **'Crop Chemophobia: Will precaution kill the Green Revolution?'** a book that dismisses concerns about toxic chemicals
 - Position paper for the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) entitled **'Scared to death: how chemophobia threatens public health'**. The ACSH is a science front group whose donors include Coca-Cola, McDonalds and chemical and GM seed companies Bayer Crop Science and Syngenta.[\[xi\]](#)
 - Articles defending:

- Shale gas (fracking)[xii]
- Plastics[xiii]
- Hormone disrupting BPA[xiv]
- The pesticide atrazine that is linked to hormone disruption, cancer and birth defects[xv]
- Bee-harming neonicotoid pesticides[xvi] that are systemic, cannot be washed off and are linked to human neurotoxicity [xvii]

MADGE fact checking of common Jon Entine talking points:

1. There are no more safety concerns with GM crops than with organic or conventional crops:

Fact: Studies show that GM foods can be toxic, allergenic, or have unintended nutritional changes[xviii]

2. Serious scientists support GM crops

Fact: over 300 scientists have signed a peer reviewed open letter saying there is no consensus on the safety of GM crops. [xix] , There have been no epidemiological studies to see the effect of GM on humans. 'Some of the studies (on GM food) give serious cause for concern and should be followed up by more detailed investigations over an extended period of time'

There is a large and growing body of scientific evidence showing harm from GM crops and their associated pesticides. [xx]

3. Numerous scientific bodies say GM food is safe.

Fact: 'An expert panel of the Royal Society of Canada issued a report thatdeclared that it is 'scientifically unjustifiable' to presume that GM foods are safe without rigorous scientific testing'. This has not occurred, most studies are done by the GM companies and are 90 days or less. Some test non-human health outcomes for example the size of chicken breasts or the tenderness of lamb chops. 'The positions taken by other organizations have frequently been highly qualified, acknowledging data gaps and potential risks, as well as potential benefits, of GM technology'. [xxi]

4. GM crops are not associated with the development of superweeds

Fact: Superweeds, caused in part by the repeated spraying of Roundup on GM crops, now infest 49 % of US farms. [xxii] To deal with these weeds new GM crops have been developed that will be sprayed with Roundup (glyphosate) as well as 2,4-D. [xxiii] 2,4-D was an ingredient in Agent Orange, used as a defoliant in the Vietnam war. It is continuing to cause birth defects in the descendants of the Vietnamese, US and Australians affected.

5. Patent laws have been on seeds since the 1930s

Fact: In the US in 1930 only plants that reproduce by cutting or grafting were patented, not seeds. In 1970 the Plant Variety Protection Act covered seeds but it allowed farmers to save seed and sell to other farmers, this right was removed in 1994. Patenting of seed developed in from 1980 onwards and GM seeds were patented. [xxiv]

6. Farmers can choose what seeds they want to grow

Fact: Chemical companies like Syngenta, Monsanto, Bayer, Dow, BASF and Du Pont have increasingly bought up seed companies worldwide. They control over 75% of all commercially traded seed including GM, conventional, organic and heirloom. [xxv] Five hundred farmers a year are investigated by Monsanto. One hundred and fifty have been sued and seven hundred have settled out of court. [xxvi]

7. GM crops use fewer, less toxic pesticides

Fact: Most GM crops are sprayed with Roundup, active ingredient glyphosate. The Maximum Residue Limit for glyphosate in soybeans in Australia is 10mg/kg (10 parts per million or

10,000 parts per billion).[xxvii] Glyphosate has been found to damage rats' livers and kidneys at 0.1 parts per billion.[xxviii] The WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) recently labelled glyphosate as a Class 2A 'probable carcinogen'.[xxix] MRL levels have had to be increased to allow for the increase in glyphosate levels on GM crops.[i]

For comment ring

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