

## **What Are You Eating? Does a PR Firm Know?**

There is a food fight going on. And the PR firm of Ketchum is right in the middle of it.

With the world in an uproar over GMO (genetically modified organism) foods vs. organic foods, some big money is being thrown around. And with big money in business often comes the need for or certainly the hiring of a powerful PR firm.

When Monsanto, the world's largest seed company and one of the leading players in the biotechnology industry, decided to put some clout to its campaign in support of their GMO products, they turned to Ketchum. And Ketchum then turned to the sometimes protected and removed world of academia to gain its strengths and persuasiveness. But no more. Academics are now front and center on both sides of the debate – organic as well as GMO.

Ketchum and Monsanto contend that they are merely gaining and distributing scientifically gained facts on the positives of G.M.O. But much is being said about the amount of money in grants given to universities such as the University of Florida to further research in this field, and to top scientists in the field, such as Dr. Kevin Folta of the University of Florida, to travel and speak in favor of and to promote GMO's, including to Washington.

Of course, money is also being spent on the organic food side, too, with Stonyfield Organic Farms, makers of organic yogurt, at the lead. But funds in this industry do not compare to the expenditures of the GMO business.

Furthering its effort to promote GMO's, the Ketchum agency launched the recent website GMO Answers. Purported to be a vehicle for the public to gain access to so called unbiased information on the question of safety of GMO's, there is serious question about the authenticity or even the credibility of the information and answers on the site.

U.S. Right to Know, a new nonprofit organization which exposes what the food industry does not want the public to know, recently questioned just that. In an article on their website, [www.usrtk.org/gmo.gmo-answers](http://www.usrtk.org/gmo.gmo-answers), they cited that a number of the so called scientific answers were given by scientists who have been given money by the GMO industry and were therefore, in their view, not unbiased. Further, they cited that not only was this a PR spin tool to gain a following for GMO's (and thereby their industries), but that the site actually won a PR award for it: the prestigious CLIO advertising award for Crisis Management and Issue Management. And so the question is asked, is this an unbiased media tool for the public or is it a PR tool for the GMO industry?

Right to Know goes further in its article, questioning the integrity of Ketchum, citing that it had been the PR firm for Russia and has been implicated in espionage efforts against agencies against GMOs.

With money being spent to excess on both sides and with passions and emotions and laws at stake, it pays to consider, what are you really eating?

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