

A large, light green, semi-transparent circular graphic that frames the central text. It has a thick, irregular border.

# CAN WE TRUST EFSA'S SCIENCE?



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# CAN WE TRUST EFSA'S SCIENCE?

## ○ Problems with the GMO Panel

- 1. Biased towards industry
- 2. Too close to industry
- 3. Declarations of interest are not consistent or accurate
- 4. Conflict of interest with the national approval committees



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# BIASED TOWARDS INDUSTRY

## Example 1: Antibiotic resistance markers (ARMs)

- Directive 2001/18: phase out of ARMs which “*may have adverse effects on human health and the environment*”
- EFSA: also “*taking into account the limited availability of alternatives*”.
- EFSA: ARMs are required “*to ensure the efficient selection of transgenic events in plants.*”



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# BIASED TOWARDS INDUSTRY

## Example 2: Antibiotic resistance markers (ARMs)

- The *ampR* gene is present in Syngenta's Bt176 maize
- EFSA: “should not be present in GM plants to be placed on the market.”
- However, should only apply to *future* GM crops



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# TOO CLOSE TO INDUSTRY

- **Example 1**
- **3 EFSA scientists members/supporters of the Public Research and Regulation (PPR)**
- **Buhk, Schiemann and Sakalaris**
- **PPR = industry-funded pressure group that campaigns for weaker biosafety legislation and against public access to information.**



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# TOO CLOSE TO INDUSTRY

## Other examples

- Panel members on the steering committees of industry conferences eg Buhk
- Panel members legitimise industry propaganda by starring on their promotional videos eg Bartsch, Buhk
- Ad hoc experts eg ex-Monsanto staff (Cockburn), pro-GMO scientists (Phipps)



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# DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- **Inconsistent**
- **Example: members of the PPR...**



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# Sakalaris

(4) Any Membership role or affiliation that you have in organisations/bodies/club with an interest in the work of the Authority:

\* Providing reports on behalf of my Institute (NIHR) on Biotek. Issues in Greece. Reports are been used by various organizations, public or private.

\* Member of the "Public Research & Regulation Initiative" participation on behalf of the PRR to the MOP2 on Biosafety

(5) Other interests or facts that the undersigned considers pertinent:



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# Schiemann

- (2) Indirect interests (indirect financial, e.g. grants, sponsorships, or other kind of benefits):

no

- (3) Interests deriving from the professional activities of the applicant or his/her close family Members:

Professional activities for BBFA a competent Authority in Germany, do not interfere with my activities for EFSA.

- (4) Any Membership role or affiliation that you have in organisations/bodies/club with an interest in the work of the Authority:

no

- (5) Other interests or facts that the undersigned considers pertinent:

no



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- (1) Direct interest (financial benefits arising from, for example, employment, contracted work, investments, fees etc.):

*non*

- (2) Indirect interests (indirect financial, e.g. grants, sponsorships, or other kind of benefits):

*non*

- (3) Interests deriving from the professional activities of the applicant or his/her close family Members:

*non*

- (4) Any Membership role or affiliation that you have in organisations/bodies/club with an interest in the work of the Authority:

*non*

- (5) Other interests or facts that the undersigned considers pertinent:

*Involvement in risk assessment and decision making  
as member of the German competent authority*



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# INACCURATE: Example 1 Buhk

- **Member/supporter of PPR**
- **EFSA Guidance: Intellectual interests**
- **“...Intellectual interests also include participation in public interest groups, professional/scientific societies...which have an agenda or an interest or involvement in the Authority’s work.”**



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## Example 2 : Buhk

- Steering Committee of the Agriculture Biotechnology International Conference, 2004
- “Europe’s most important date for AgBiotech in 2004”
- Sponsored by companies including Bayer, KWS, DuPont and BASF
- EFSA Guidance: Work carried for a food-related business
- “During the preceding five years, all activities performed for or on behalf of a company operating in the food, feed or animal production related business.”

## Example 3 : Gasson

- Previously consultant to Danisco Venture - a venture capital company that invests in biotechnology companies
- Nothing declared in current declarations
- EFSA Guidance: Work carried for a food-related business
- “During the preceding five years, all activities performed for or on behalf of a company operating in the food, feed or animal production related business.”



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# Conflict of interest with the national approval committees

- **Around a third of the Panel are involved in the national approval committees.**
- **Conflict both ways**
  - 2001/18 - judging own decision made at the national level
  - Food/feed - judging own decision made in the EFSA
  - Both footballer and referee!



# Why does this matter?

- **The various interests of individuals in a group (e.g., a panel) once put together may well result in a balanced interest of the group as a whole.**
- **(EFSA Guidance on Declaration of Interests)**
- **Risk managers and the general public need to know whether the people making risk assessments have an interest in the outcome.**
- **Europe needs an EFSA that is not only independent, but is seen to be independent.**



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