

On October 29 the New York Times ran a piece on how the biotech industry has failed to deliver on its promises for GMO crops. The article appeared less than a month after the biotech industry asked congressional leaders for \$3 million in taxpayer-provided funding to “educate” the public about biotechnology and agricultural production. Wow, now they want us, the taxpayers, to give them the money to “educate” the market about their products.

The letter, addressed to four members of the Ag Appropriations Committee, stated that the FDA and the USDA, would be able to more easily convey to the public science- and fact-based information about food. The letter claimed “there is a tremendous amount of misinformation about agricultural biotechnology in the public domain.” I would argue, and the Times investigation confirms, that much of that “misinformation” comes from industry itself.

Specifically, as the Times reports, GMO crops have not led to higher yields, and they have led to greater, not reduced, use of pesticides. For those of us who follow issues of human health, and the higher and higher volumes of increasingly toxic pesticides, this is really pretty old news. The only sustainable path towards food security is agro-ecology, or regenerative agriculture, something practiced extensively here in Humboldt County

On a very positive note Sonoma County just joined Humboldt, Trinity, Marin, Mendocino and Santa Cruz Counties by passing measure M with nearly 56% of the vote, banning the planting of GMO crops. While we still need Del Norte County to make it a clean sweep in the 2nd Congressional District, Humboldt is now part of the largest GMO free zone in the United States. Including Santa Cruz County, that’s 13,734 square miles. On a grander scale that might be miniscule, but public opinion is changing and those

who want non-GMO food are clearly more than a fringe group of elitists.

Admittedly, \$3 million is peanuts in the overall scheme of congressional spending bills—especially for an industry that has spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past few years on stealth PR tactics and deployed over a dozen front groups to push coordinated messages to attack organic food, defend pesticides, and the routine use of antibiotics, and promote GMOs — messages that are making their way, day after day, to the pages of the largest media outlets.

GMOs have been on the market for more than 20 years. Congress should allocate money to support the type of agriculture we know will lead to food security at home and abroad, not to what has already proven a failure.