

Philippine opponents of GMO Golden Rice depicted and ignored as 'anti-science Luddites'

Philippine anti-GMO activists are badly depicted and ignored by the global press.

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GMO Debate
A critical perspective on eugenics

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**GOLDEN RICE, NO ENTRY!
SHUTDOWN IRRI!**

“Our Land, Our Food, Our Rice!”
Reject Golden Rice!

 **Philippines GMO Rice**

An Example Case of an "Anti-science" Inquisition

In 2013, Filipino opponents of GMO rice, grouped together in [Stop Golden Rice! Network \(SGRN\)](#), destroyed a test field of GMO Golden Rice that had been planted without their knowledge or consent. This action sparked global outrage and set in motion a decade-long narrative that would label these opponents as "*anti-science Luddites*" responsible for the deaths of thousands of children. The Philippines case provides a stark example of how the "*anti-science*" narrative can be weaponized to silence legitimate concerns and potentially lead to a modern form of inquisition.

The "Anti-Science Luddites" Narrative

Since the 2013 incident, Philippine GMO opponents have been consistently portrayed in global media as backward-thinking individuals whose actions directly lead to child mortality. This narrative has been propagated through various channels, including prominent scientific organizations and media outlets.



Christopher Mayes, a senior lecturer in philosophy at Deakin University, summarized the situation:

Global outrage ensued after group of Filipino farmers destroyed a test crop of golden rice. There has been little recognition of the Sisyphean struggle of farmers in countries such as the Philippines, Bangladesh and India, yet these farmers have been described as anti-science Luddites that cause the deaths of thousands of children.

Source: phys.org

This characterization was further amplified by statements from political figures like former UK Environment Secretary **Owen Paterson**, who declared:



Environmental groups fighting against the use of GM crops in Africa and Asia are "wicked" and potentially condemning millions of people to a premature death.

The Accusatory Nature of the Narrative

The "anti-science Luddites" label, when combined with accusations of causing child deaths, creates a potent and dangerous narrative. This framing goes beyond mere disagreement, effectively positioning GMO opponents as criminals responsible for mass casualties. The rhetoric has been consistently reinforced through various media, including videos with titles such as "*Ending The Largest Killer of Children in the World*", which have reached millions of viewers globally.

This accusatory narrative serves a dual purpose: it delegitimizes opposition to GMOs while simultaneously creating a moral imperative for action against these supposed "*child killers*". The language used mirrors historical justifications for inquisitions, where dissenters were branded as heretics.

Calls for Prosecution: The Road to Inquisition

The narrative has escalated to explicit calls for prosecution of GMO opponents. In 2020, the Genetic Literacy Project stated:

"At least 200,000 people die every year GMO Golden Rice is kept off the market"

Even more alarmingly, Harvard professor [David Ropeik](#) declared:

"These are real deaths... It is absolutely fair to charge that opposition to this particular application of genetically modified food has contributed to the deaths of and injuries to millions of people. The opponents of Golden Rice who have caused this harm should be held accountable."

The Human Toll of Anti-GMO Hysteria: 1.4 Million "Life Years" Lost Since 2002

Source: [The Breakthrough Institute](#)

This call for accountability, coming from within the scientific community, suggests that those who question or oppose GMOs should face consequences for their views.

The Escalation to Security Threat

In 2021, the international science establishment took the narrative a step further. As reported in *Scientific American*, they called for anti-science to be combated as a security threat on par with terrorism and nuclear proliferation:

(2021) The Antiscience Movement Is Escalating, Going Global and Killing Thousands

Antiscience has emerged as a dominant and highly lethal force, and one that threatens global security, as much as do terrorism and nuclear proliferation. We must mount a counteroffensive and build new infrastructure to combat antiscience, just as we have for these other more widely recognized and established threats.

Antiscience is now a large and formidable security threat.

Source: [Scientific American](#)

This escalation from labeling opponents as "*anti-science Luddites*" to framing them as security threats mirrors the logic of historical inquisitions, where dissenters were seen as threats to the very fabric of society.

2024 Supreme Court GMO Rice Ban

On April 19, 2024, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a ban on genetically modified Golden Rice and GM eggplant in the country. This ruling vindicated the actions of GMO opponents who had been vilified for over a decade. However, the response from some media outlets revealed a disturbing pattern of deflection and continued stigmatization.

The Guardian published an article titled *'A Catastrophe': Greenpeace blocks planting of 'lifesaving' Golden Rice*. This framing subtly reinforced the "child killer" narrative while shifting blame to **GREENPEACE**, effectively silencing local Filipino GMO opponents. Similar articles appeared in other publications:

- ▶ The Spectator: **Children could die because of Greenpeace's Golden Rice Activism**
- ▶ Reason: **Greenpeace Crusade Will Blind and Kill Children**



MASIPAG: "A response to The Guardian's article on GMO Golden Rice"

This deflection strategy was quickly identified and criticized by **MASIPAG**, a farmer-scientist network in the Philippines. In an official response, MASIPAG stated:

*The Guardian's article incorrectly and deceptively claims **GREENPEACE** "convinced" the court to halt GMO Golden Rice operations. The case details are public knowledge, yet The Guardian ignored the facts, akin to a colonialist disregarding the true narrative of the locals.*

The Guardian consciously lumped the number of Filipino GMO Golden Rice opponents into 'local farmers', which to us is a clear step to silence the narrative of the Filipino people.

The Corruption Angle

The deflection of attention to **GREENPEACE**, despite the court ruling being based on evidence from local Filipino petitioners, raises questions about potential corruption in the narrative surrounding GMO Golden Rice. As early as 2011, **Marcia Ishii-Eiteman**, a senior scientist with a background in insect ecology and pest management, pointed out the vested interests behind Golden Rice:

"An elite, so-called Humanitarian Board where Syngenta sits – along with the inventors of Golden Rice, Rockefeller Foundation, USAID and public relations and marketing experts, among a handful of others. Not a single farmer, indigenous person or even an ecologist or sociologist to assess the huge political, social and ecological implications of this massive experiment. And the leader of Philippines IRRI's Golden Rice project is none other than Gerald Barry, previously Director of Research at Monsanto."



Sarojeni V Rengam, executive director of **Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Asia and the Pacific**, called GMO Golden Rice a trojan horse of the GMO industry:

"Golden Rice is really a Trojan horse; a public relations stunt pulled by the agribusiness corporations to garner acceptance of genetically engineered (GE) crops and food."

Conclusion

The Philippines GMO Golden Rice case provides a clear example of how the "*anti-science*" narrative can be weaponized to silence opposition and potentially lead to a modern form of inquisition. The accusatory nature of the "*anti-science Luddites*" label, combined with claims of causing child deaths, creates a dangerous environment where legitimate concerns are dismissed and those who raise them are threatened with prosecution.

The response to the 2024 Philippine Supreme Court ruling further demonstrates how this narrative can be manipulated, deflecting attention from local voices and maintaining the stigmatization of GMO opponents. This case serves as a stark warning about the potential for scientific discourse to be corrupted by vested interests and the dangers of uncritically accepting the "*anti-science*" framing of complex issues.

To delve deeper into the philosophical underpinnings of the "*anti-science*" narrative and its implications for scientific discourse, particularly in the context of the GMO debate, readers are encouraged to explore:

"Anti-Science": A Modern Inquisition

Source:  GMODebate.org

Stop Golden Rice Network (SGRN)

We believe that GMO Golden Rice is unnecessary and unwanted and being peddled by corporations purely for their profit-making agenda. Golden Rice will only strengthen the grip of corporations over rice and agriculture and will endanger agrobiodiversity and peoples' health as well. Therefore, farmers, consumers and basic sectors have been campaigning against Golden Rice since the mid-2000s, including the historical uprooting of Golden Rice field trials back in 2013.

stopgoldenricenetwork.org

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Stop Golden Rice! Network (SGRN)

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