

to publish, and we invite their criticism. I can think of no other institution—including activist groups—that adheres to such an exacting standard.

With regard to USRTK's specific accusation that Folta used text on the GMO Answers website that was "ghostwritten" by the Ketchum public relations firm, USRTK continues to overstate the issue. The facts are that when first contacted to write for the site, Folta was provided by Ketchum with sample answers meant as a guide for answering the first questions on the public website. As these answers were scientifically correct, Folta elected to post versions of them he had edited. In Folta's review of the 67 answers that he provided to GMO Answers, he found only two cases where he amended Ketchum samples in this manner. The rest were Folta's original work. Folta did all of this work on his own time (and continues to do so), and in these two cases, he used a well-researched and accurate statement as a starting point. Folta adjusted, rewrote and changed text to make it his own.

It is my hope that once the University of Florida has produced the sought-after records, the university's Institute of Food

and Agricultural Sciences, which I lead, can return its full attention to developing efficient, sustainable and environmentally sensitive agriculture.

We are in a race against time to bring science to the rescue of Florida's iconic citrus industry, to stave off pests and disease, and to feed the hungry. Producing e-mails to feed the narrative of an activist group and debating what those emails say slows us all down in that race.

COMPETING FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The author declares no competing financial interests

Jack M Payne

*University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA
e-mail: jackpayne@ufl.edu*

Nature Biotechnology replies:

This journal is in favor of transparency concerning disclosure of financial interests of researchers. In terms of federally mandated disclosure, since 2012, the Physician Payments Sunshine Act has required academic investigators to report travel and expenses reimbursed by a for-profit entity that is not part of a sponsored grant or contract. This applies to any

researcher receiving funding from the US National Institutes of Health. Plant researchers, such as Kevin Folta, working outside of the US Public Health Service, do not fall under those rules. The question is, do the harms arising from ties between agrochemical companies and academic researchers warrant the additional burden, expense and inconvenience of implementing reimbursement tracking systems in every institution, as USRTK would like to see mandated by federal law? In the case of pharmaceuticals, the link between industry ties, bias of the literature and exposure of patients to unnecessary harms was clear. Can the same be said of the ties between agricultural researchers and companies? On the other hand, as mentioned in our Editorial, in the GM 'debate', Monsanto (St. Louis) and the rest of industry has already "been blamed for everything from farmer suicides to lacing milk with growth hormone and pesticides." Perhaps the implementation of a system of transparency concerning industry interactions at institutions undertaking agricultural research would go some way to restoring public trust in scientists working with the seed and agrochemical industry.