



March 30, 2015

Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
U.S. Senate
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
U.S. Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Request for Investigation of Harassment and Censorship of USDA Scientists

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

We write to request an investigation of whether scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are being harassed, censored or blocked entirely when their work runs counter to the interests of the agribusiness or agrichemical industries.

On March 27th, in an article titled “Environmental Group Seeks Greater Protection for USDA Scientists,” *Reuters* reported that USDA scientists are being harassed, and their work is being censored, when their work “conflicts with agribusiness industry interests.”

The *Reuters* article is based on a March 26th citizen petition by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to USDA, asking it to “Explicitly prohibit political suppression and alteration”

Exposing what the food industry *doesn't* want us to know

USRTK.ORG • 6026A HARWOOD AVE. • OAKLAND, CA 94618 • (415) 944-7350

and to “Broadly protect scientific information from management suppression and alteration except for reasons of technical merit.”

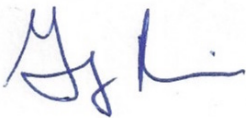
According to the *Reuters* article, “PEER's executive director Jeff Ruch said on Friday that at least 10 USDA scientists have been investigated or faced other consequences arising from research that called into question the safety of certain agricultural chemicals.” It continues: “Research into glyphosate, the key ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide, and neonicotinoid insecticides, which have been linked to honey bee and monarch butterfly endangerment, face particular scrutiny, Ruch said.”

The article states that, “Ruch said his organization had received mounting complaints over the last year from USDA scientists claiming they have been ordered to retract studies, water down findings, remove their names from authorship and experienced delays in approvals for publication of research papers. The petition does not identify any specific research or scientists.” It quotes a “senior scientist at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service” who said that, “Your words are changed, your papers are censored or edited or you are not allowed to submit them at all...”

If true, this is a major scandal at USDA. It is not the proper role of the USDA to engage in a cover up for Monsanto or other agrichemical companies. It is intolerable that the agribusiness and agrichemical should be able to interfere with USDA scientists and their work. Those scientists work for the public, not Monsanto nor the agrichemical industry. They must be fully insulated from the political pressure of the agribusiness and agrichemical industries. It is crucial to the public interest that they do their work without industry harassment or obstruction. The integrity of the USDA is at stake.

We urge you to conduct a full and thorough investigation into corporate interference with USDA scientists, to publicly release any evidence of industry interference with USDA scientists, and to ensure that such interference never happens again.

Sincerely,



Gary Ruskin
Executive Director



March 30, 2015

Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Room 117-W Jamie Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong:

We write to request an investigation of whether scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are being harassed, censored or blocked entirely when their work runs counter to the interests of the agribusiness or agrichemical industries.

On March 27th, in an article titled "Environmental Group Seeks Greater Protection for USDA Scientists," *Reuters* reported that USDA scientists are being harassed, and their work is being censored, when their work "conflicts with agribusiness industry interests."

The *Reuters* article is based on a March 26th citizen petition by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to USDA, asking it to "Explicitly prohibit political suppression and alteration" and to "Broadly protect scientific information from management suppression and alteration except for reasons of technical merit."

According to the *Reuters* article, "PEER's executive director Jeff Ruch said on Friday that at least 10 USDA scientists have been investigated or faced other consequences arising from research that called into question the safety of certain agricultural chemicals." It continues: "Research into glyphosate, the key ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide, and neonicotinoid insecticides, which have been linked to honey bee and monarch butterfly endangerment, face particular scrutiny, Ruch said."

The article states that, "Ruch said his organization had received mounting complaints over the last year from USDA scientists claiming they have been ordered to retract studies, water down findings, remove their names from authorship and experienced delays in approvals for publication of research papers. The petition does not identify any specific research or scientists." It quotes a "senior scientist at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service" who said that, "Your words are changed, your papers are censored or edited or you are not allowed to submit them at all..."

If true, this is a major scandal at USDA. It is not the proper role of the USDA to engage in a cover up for Monsanto or other agrichemical companies. It is intolerable that the agribusiness and agrichemical should be able to interfere with USDA scientists and their work. Those scientists work for the public, not Monsanto nor the agrichemical industry. They must be fully insulated from the political pressure of the agribusiness and agrichemical industries. It is crucial to the public interest

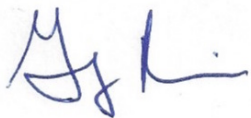
Exposing what the food industry *doesn't* want us to know

USRTK.ORG • 6026A HARWOOD AVE. • OAKLAND, CA 94618 • (415) 944-7350

that they do their work without industry harassment or obstruction. The integrity of the USDA is at stake.

We urge you to conduct a full and thorough investigation into corporate interference with USDA scientists, and to publicly release any evidence of industry interference with USDA scientists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "GR", is positioned above the typed name.

Gary Ruskin
Executive Director