



American Farm Bureau Federation



LEADING FARM ORGANIZATIONS CHALLENGE DANNON AND OTHER FOOD COMPANIES ON RETREAT FROM SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PRACTICES

Letter to Dannon Protests Environmentally-Damaging Move to Deselect GMOs

ARLINGTON, VA (October 17, 2016) – Leaders of the nation’s top farming organizations joined together today in urging food companies to recognize that their sustainability goals, intended to reduce the use of natural resources, cannot be achieved without the use of modern agricultural practices, despite any misleading assertions to the contrary.

This focus on deceptive food company marketing claims is in response to Dannon’s recent pledge to eliminate the use of safe and proven crop technology to feed the dairy cows that supply milk for its yogurt products. Dannon is one of several prominent food manufacturers and retailers that in recent years has taken steps to eliminate genetically-modified ingredients from its supply, claiming that such a move improves the sustainability of its products.

[In a letter sent today](#) to Mariano Lozano, head of Dannon’s U.S. operations, the farm groups said that the company’s strategy to eliminate GMOs “is the exact opposite of the sustainable agriculture that you claim to be seeking. Your pledge would force farmers to abandon safe, sustainable farming practices that have enhanced farm productivity over the last 20 years while greatly reducing the carbon footprint of American agriculture.”

“This is just marketing puffery, not any true innovation that improves the actual product offered to consumers,” said Randy Mooney, chairman of the National Milk Producers Federation, and a dairy farmer from Rogersville, Missouri. “What’s worse is that removing GMOs from the equation is harmful to the environment – the opposite of what these companies claim to be attempting to achieve.”

The letter was cosigned by the farmer leaders of the American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, American Sugarbeet Growers Association, National Corn Growers Association, National Milk Producers Federation and U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance. Collectively, the six organizations represent hundreds of thousands of farmers and food producers across the U.S. The groups agree that biotechnology plays an important role in reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture, and challenged as disingenuous the assertion that sustainability is enhanced by stopping the use of GMO processes.

During the last 20 years, advancements in agricultural technology have allowed farmers to use less pesticides and herbicides, fossil fuels, and water, and prevent the loss of soil to erosion. Taking away this technology is akin to turning back the clock and using outdated 20th century technology to run a business.

“Farming organizations are standing up for the technology that supports continuous improvement in farm sustainability. Farmers and ranchers have grown GMO crops over the past 20 years precisely

because biotechnology helps farmers preserve resources for the future,” said Nancy Kavazanjian, chairwoman of U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (USFRA), and a corn, soybean and wheat farmer in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. “When food companies are making sourcing decisions, farm groups encourage them to recognize that modern, conventional agriculture is sustainable.”

Numerous, conclusive studies have come out over the last 20 years proving the safety of GMO food and the environmental benefits of growing GM crops. Most recently, 109 Nobel laureates announced their support of GMO technology, citing a study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine saying, “the study committee found no substantiated evidence of a difference in risks to human health between current commercially available genetically engineered (GE) crops and conventionally bred crops, nor did it find conclusive cause-and-effect evidence of environmental problems from the GE crops.”

“Despite overwhelming evidence supporting the safety GMO crops and their benefits to the environment, marketers of some major food brands, such as Dannon, have aligned themselves against biotechnology,” said Wesley Spurlock, President of the National Corn Growers Association. “Farming organizations believe in open and honest communication with consumers, and allowing people to make informed choices in the market. But we cannot sit by while certain food companies spread misinformation under the guise of a marketing campaign.”

U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance CEO Randy Krotz also adds, “When food companies directly mislead consumers, as has been done in this example with Dannon, individual farmers as well as farm organizations will continue to assertively defend our critical technologies.”

For more information on sustainability in agriculture visit www.fooddialogues.com.

About the American Farm Bureau Federation

With family members at the county or parish level in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, the American Farm Bureau Federation is the unified national "Voice of Agriculture," working to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. AFBF is the nation's largest and most influential grassroots organization of farm and ranch families. Follow AFBF on Twitter (@FarmBureau <https://twitter.com/FarmBureau>) and Facebook <http://facebook.com/AmericanFarmBureau>.

About American Soybean Association (ASA)

ASA represents all U.S. soybean farmers on domestic and international issues of importance to the soybean industry. ASA's advocacy efforts are made possible through voluntary farmer membership by farmers in 30 states where soybeans are grown.

About the American Sugarbeet Growers Association

The American Sugarbeet Growers Association represents all Sugarbeet growers in eleven states. These family farmers formed regional cooperatives and own all twenty two sugarbeet processing in the U.S., producing almost 60% of the sugar grown in America.

About National Corn Growers Association (NCGA)

Founded in 1957, the National Corn Growers Association represents more than 40,000 dues-paying corn farmers nationwide and the interests of more than 300,000 growers who contribute through corn checkoff programs in their states. NCGA and its 48 affiliated state organizations work together to create and increase opportunities for corn growers.

About the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF)

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, Va., develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.

About U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance® (USFRA®)

U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance (USFRA) consists of about 100 farmer and rancher led organizations and agricultural partners representing virtually all aspects of agriculture, working to engage in dialogue with consumers who have questions about how today's food is grown and raised. USFRA is committed to continuous improvement and supporting U.S. farmers and ranchers' efforts to increase confidence and trust in today's agriculture. To learn more, visit our website at www.fooddialogues.com. You can also find USFRA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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