

The Pro-GMO Lobby's Latest Scapegoat: "Organic Farming is Starving The Poor". Monsanto Can Save the World from Hunger

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

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Not since the original Luddites smashed cotton mill machinery in early 19th century England, have we seen such an organised, fanatical antagonism to progress and science. These enemies of the Green Revolution call themselves 'progressive', but their agenda could hardly be more backward-looking and regressive... their policies would condemn billions to hunger, poverty and underdevelopment.

[Owen Paterson](#) stated the above earlier this year during a speech he gave in South Africa. Paterson is the former Environment Minister for the UK.

Now, a few months on, writing in the New York Post ('[How Neil Young, Greenpeace work to starve the world's poor](#)') he is mouthing similar claims and accusations, this time focusing on Neil Young's recent anti-GMO/ Monsanto [album](#).

Paterson writes:

"In reality, GMOs can save millions of lives. It's the environmentalists who are doing real harm."

He continues:

The best example of this is Golden Rice, a miracle grain enhanced with Vitamin A-producing beta-carotene. Developed 15 years ago, it was considered a breakthrough in bio-fortified technology... Each year, 500,000 people, mostly children, lose their sight; half of them will die within a year of becoming blind... Many of those lives could be saved if Golden Rice were in their diets. But the ongoing opposition of anti-GMO activist groups and their lavish scare campaign with its combined global war chest estimated to exceed \$500 million a year have kept Golden Rice off the global market. Deploying highly sophisticated PR and unscientific scaremongering, Greenpeace has led that opposition.

If Paterson wants to start talking about 'global war chests' and political influence, he should consider the money the biotech industry has behind it (for example, consider [Monsanto's annual profits](#) and [its value as a company](#)) and the massive influence it has over science, governments and policies (see [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#)) - not to mention the \$100 million spent to prevent labeling GMOs in the US and the amount spent on lobbying, advertising and campaign donations (see [this](#) spending by Monsanto for the US alone). It makes

Paterson's claims appear ludicrous.

Critics of GMOs are merely fighting a rear guard action when faced with such enormous financial wealth and massive political clout. Moreover, they are very often ordinary people who may not belong to any group but whose concerns are nevertheless legitimate. The type of smear campaign campaign Paterson engages in is an attempt to side line all criticism of GMOs from wherever it comes.

Patterson then ludicrously talks about Greenpeace being put on trial for "crimes against humanity" and finishes by saying:

"Instead of bashing companies that are trying to save lives, Young ought to use his star power to convince the NGO community to do the right thing and support giving the developing world the GMO tools it needs to feed its growing, and tragically malnourished, populations."

Owen Paterson is a staunch supporter of GM technology, so staunch in fact that fellow Conservative Party MP Zac Goldsmith stated Paterson was little more than an [industry puppet](#).

It comes as no surprise that Paterson would state the things he does. As Environment Minister, his support for GMOs was being carried out in partnership with a number of pro-GMO institutions, including the Agricultural Biotechnology Council (ABC), which is backed by GM companies such as Monsanto, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience. Last year, despite government attempts to throw a veil of secrecy over meetings and conversations it had with the industry, GeneWatch UK uncovered evidence that GMO companies are driving UK government policy in this area (see [this](#)).

His claims about GMOs have already been demolished and are erroneous, misleading and little more than emotive biotech sector inspired PR (see [the twisted world of Mr Paterson](#) and [this](#)). And his claims about Golden Rice are not only [false or misleading](#) (also see [this](#) and [this](#)) but seem to be a key part of a [PR strategy](#) he thinks should be used to weaken opposition to GMOs.

After attempting to smear and denigrate opponents, let's take a brief look at Paterson himself. Back in 2010, his wealth was estimated to be [£1.5 million](#) (approx. \$2.35 million). He was a member of David Cameron's cabinet of millionaires. Some 23 members of that cabinet were estimated to be worth in total at least £63 million. Just 9% of the population have over £1 million in wealth. In other words, Paterson is a rich man.

He is a rich man who belongs to the right-wing Conservative Party, which is waging an ideological war on working people in the UK in an attempt to justify even more 'austerity' measures. And the outcome has been predictable.

See [this](#) about rising food poverty and increasing reliance on food banks in the UK. See [this](#) about the five richest families in Britain being worth more than the poorest 20%. See [this](#) about one third of Britain's population being in poverty.

According to [this report](#), almost 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions; 12 million are too poor to engage in common social activities; one in three cannot afford to heat their homes adequately in winter; and four million children and adults

are not properly fed (Britain's population is estimated at 63 to 64 million).

Welfare cuts have [pushed hundreds of thousands below the poverty line](#) since 2012, including more than 300,000 children.

Paterson's pro-privatisation, deregulation, welfare-cutting, pro-big business, anti-union Conservative Party' policies are driving the statistics mentioned above, which are predicted to get [much worse](#). And it will get much worse because the economic agenda that his party introduced three decades back has been to drive down wages, automate the labour process or offshore it to cheap labour economies and now to impose 'austerity' on the millions who have become surplus to requirements and considered a drain.

But Paterson really feels the pain of the poor - in faraway lands that is. He will even travel around the world to attend conferences to shout about his concern for the poor.

His indifference to poverty in the UK is in marked contrast to his concern about the poor abroad. The indifference suddenly becomes transformed only when there is an opportunity to line the pockets of the global agritech companies.

Paterson is a man on a mission. He says GMOs can save the world from hunger.

The evidence is that they can't: no amount of genetic engineering can address the [structural aspects](#) of poverty and the globalised system of food production and distribution. The evidence thus far is that GM agriculture has arguably [increased food insecurity](#).

Paterson and other prominent pro-GMO mouthpieces like him rely on false claims, name calling and emotional blackmail. They wave an iron fist of neoliberal ideology wrapped in a velvet glove of [bogus humanitarianism](#).

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Articles by: [Colin Todhunter](#)

About the author:

Colin Todhunter is an extensively published independent writer and former social policy researcher. Originally from the UK, he has spent many years in India. His website is www.colintodhunter.com
https://twitter.com/colin_todhunter

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