

Voice of Young Science  
c/o Sense About Science  
14a Clerkenwell Green  
London  
EC1R 0DP

Director Curatorial & Public Engagement  
Horniman Museum and Gardens  
100 London Road  
London  
SE23 3PQ

Dear Mr Corum

We are early career scientists, conducting research around the UK on a variety of topics including plant genetics and food security. We write firstly to applaud the Horniman Museum for engaging young people in the debate on GM crops and the wider issues of food security via your interactive and accessible exhibition 'Plantastic'.

However, we hold some concerns over particular aspects of the exhibition that provide non-evidence based information. We feel that some of the material displayed brings out past misconceptions and unhelpful misrepresentations of GM crops.

Specifically in the 'Thorny Issues' section:

- **Scientist and doctor:** For most scientists GM is not unnatural in any way as we have been altering crops for thousands of years via breeding. With regards to toxicity and allergenicity GM crops must go through a rigorous safety assessment by The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).
- **Farmer:** Using GM varieties can result in decreased use of fertiliser and pesticide which decreases the environmental impact of their farming practices and is therefore an additional benefit.
- **Trade organisation:** Plant breeder's rights and patents apply equally to non-GM varieties and hence IP and monopolisation are not GM specific issues or reasons to not use them.
- **Agronomist:** We face a significant challenge comprising several factors that need to be addressed using numerous scientific, ecological, technical and social approaches. GM provides us with only one tool.

Voice of Young Science (VoYS) is a network for early career researchers (PhD students, post-docs or equivalent in first job) in all sciences, engineering and medicine. Many of our members are plant scientists both highly knowledgeable on GM crops and able communicators who would be more than willing to assist the Horniman Museum in increasing the weight of sensible, evidence-based opinion in its exhibit. You will also find more information on the [www.senseaboutscience.org](http://www.senseaboutscience.org) website where we have published a 'Making sense of GM' guide.

Would you be willing to meet with some of us and discuss how we can help to improve the exhibition?

Yours sincerely

Matt Audley Plant scientist & VoYS member

Chelsea Snell Food scientist & VoYS member

*and fellow VoYS members who are calling on you to improve the exhibition*

Suvi Honkanen PhD student in plant genetics & VoYS Member

Kevin Duggan PhD candidate in cognitive neuroscience & VoYS Member

Anna Tiley Plant Pathologist & VoYS Member

Dr Marc Jones Physicist & VoYS Member

Tsvetomila Mateeva PhD student in Earth science & VoYS Member

Luke Bell Food & Plant Scientist & VoYS Member

Megan De Ste Croix Genetic Microbiologist & VoYS Member

Kristina Popova Biochemist and Data journalist & VoYS Member

Imrane Shurdhani Biochemical Engineer & VoYS Member

Frances Crane Biomedical Engineer & VoYS Member

Theresia H Mina Clinical Scientist & VoYS Member

Dale Knight Biochemist & VoYS Member

Mabon Elis Plant Scientist & VoYS Member

Gabriel Kaufman Immunologist & VoYS Member

Mrs Shona Whittam Radiotherapy Physicist & VoYS Member

Dr Margaret Heslin Epidemiologist & VoYS Member

Dr K Shipman Medical doctor & VoYS Member

Lucy Ford Evolutionary Biologist & VoYS Member

Janine Bowring Microbiologist & VoYS Member

Romy Lorenz Neuroscientist & VoYS Member

Naomi Penfold Neuroscientist & VoYS Member

Dominic Thorrington Mathematical Epidemiology & VoYS Member

Caroline Wood PhD student in Plant Science & VoYS Member

Rebecca Gladstone Microbial Bioinformatician & VoYS Member

Stephanie Smith PhD student in Plant Science & VoYS Member

Lauren Biermann Earth Systems Scientist & VoYS Member

Dr Philip B. Sellars R&D Chemist & VoYS Member

Stefan Piatek Molecular Biology and Epigenetics & VoYS Member

Clement Gravouil Plant Pathologist & VoYS Member

Arsalan Khan Food Technologist & VoYS Member

Robert Temperton Physicist & VoYS Member

Gene Nolis Materials Scientist & VoYS Member