The GMO Label and the Passing of the DARK Act: A Special Interview With Ronnie Cummins
By Dr. Joseph Mercola

JM: Dr. Joseph Mercola
RC: Ronnie Cummins

JM: What is the current state of the opposition to genetically modified organisms (GMOs)? Hi, this is Dr. Mercola, helping you take control of your health. Today we are joined by Ronnie Cummins, who is the founder of the Organic Consumers Association. We first met about six years ago now, prior to our collaboration in putting together the direct ballot initiative in the state of California. A lot has happened since then. We’re going to give you an update. Ronnie is here to help us celebrate the GMO Campaign Awareness Week. Welcome and thank you for joining us, Ronnie.

RC: Good to be with you today.

JM: There are lots of discuss. Why don’t we talk a little bit? Why don’t we answer that first question? Where are we in the opposition to the GMOs? Because a lot has happened. The Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act was passed. A whole variety of things are going on. Give us an update.

RC: Yeah. It’s interesting that in 2016, for the first time in almost 20 years, what we saw is a decrease in the amount of acreage where genetically engineered crops are growing around the world. This represents the fact that this technology is failing, in the sense of superweeds and superpests are popping up all over the world.

Three-quarters of the farmers in the United States, for example, that are planting GMO crops, like soybeans, corn or canola, are having problems with these pests that have evolved. They can’t kill them anymore with the Roundup and the BTs. There are technological problems, but I think even more important is the fact that consumers around the world have become aware of the fact that these genetically engineered crops and the toxic herbicides and pesticides that are sprayed on them are not what they want on their plates. We have market rejection.

In the European Union, which is the biggest agriculture market in the world, there are no GMO foods on the supermarket shelves for the most part. In places like the United States, despite industry [giant] Monsanto and the rest who are spending hundreds of millions of dollars, 40 somewhat percent of the population still believe that genetically engineered foods and food ingredients are dangerous. The other 20 percent or so, they’re not sure whether they’re dangerous or not. This combination of consumer rejection and basically Mother Nature’s resistance has caused a drop-off. I think this is the beginning of the end of at least this generation, the first generation, of GMO crops.

Now, industry is saying, “Don’t worry about the fact that we’re using more and more toxic pesticides and herbicides all the time. Don’t worry about these pests that are spreading across the fields. We’ve got a new generation of GMO crops where we can just do gene editing. We don’t
have to pull some DNA from a foreign species and haphazardly splice it into a corn or a soybean crop.” But the bottom line is that this gene-splicing and this so-called new gene editing are unnatural processes that disrupt the genetic structure, the natural workings of living organisms. These aren’t going to work either.

What we’re seeing is a strong growth worldwide now in organics and grass-fed farming and ranching. This is a strong growth in the United States. Organics grew about 11 percent last year. Grass-fed and grass-finished grew about 50 percent. For the first time ever, we’ve seen some of the nations in Europe, like organics grew in France by 20 percent this year. Worldwide, there’s a strong growth. Again, this is because people understand that this public health crisis has now spread worldwide and this environmental crisis and its relationship to the climate crisis are all due to an out-of-control, industrial, chemical-intensive GMO agriculture. People are turning away from this.

JM: Thank you for the update. You also mentioned the fact that there’s a lot more organic growing in the US. Those are exciting statistics. There were two developments that occurred within the last year. One of them is the development of the certification of American Grassfed Association, AGA, which really appears to be the highest form of certification that you could have for dairy and for beef, or actually any poultry animal. It would extend to chickens, sheep and goats. I’m wondering if you can comment on that development.

RC: Yeah. I think we’re seeing a massive demand now for healthier foods. Because of the work that you’ve done, Dr. Mercola, and other groups, everyday consumers have now heard that factory farmed beef and dairy, for example, are not really good for your health. But that if animals grazed naturally, herbivores grazed naturally and you don’t give them an unnatural diet of corn, you don’t shoot them up with these hormones and drugs, and add antibiotics to their feed, it’s actually a much healthier product. What’s been driving the growth of the grass-fed beef and dairy industry are these health concerns.

But also, people have become aware over the years that the factory farm system, which now 70 percent of all the farm animals in the world are confined in these factory farms and drugged up, people know this is not right. I mean you don’t have to be an ethical vegan to have feeling for animals. Animals are sentient beings. We don’t want to keep them locked up in these animal prisons. I mean industry says if you want cheap food, you’ve got to go with factory farms. But I think more and more consumers are saying, “I don’t want cheap food if it means it’s going to harm my health and the environment and if you have to be that cruel to animals.”

I think we’re seeing the beginning of the end of this factory farm model, which actually has only existed over the last 40 years or so. Most animals used to be raised naturally. Herbivores were grazing for over 10,000 years since humans have been domesticating them. It’s this wonderful coming together in the United States of the American Grassfed Association, merging in the dairy sector with dairy farmers who are already organic, to produce a higher quality 100 percent grass-fed dairy.

In the beef industry, there has been a tremendous growth in the demand for grass-fed, grass-finished that is 100 percent grass-fed beef. Unfortunately, most other grass-fed beef in the United
States is still coming from overseas, from countries like Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, because we still don’t have the infrastructure in the United States that we had 50 years ago with processing plants in every region of the country and so on and so forth, but we’re catching up.

JM: Let’s stop there for a moment because that may be a point of confusion for some people, because we produce a lot of cattle in this country. It would seem that we would have the capacity to provide quite a supply of grass-fed cattle. The problem is, as you’ve mentioned, in the processing plant. You just can’t use any old processing plant. It has to be differentiated in this whole structure and system that’s in place to allow the farmers to bring their cattle for processing. They have to be segregated. Maybe you can expand on that to help people understand why this is such a challenge.

RC: Yeah. The big picture in the United States is that we’ve got about half a million ranchers in the country, people who are raising livestock, but we’ve had a huge concentration in the buyers. There are only three or four buyers. Say you’re raising cattle somewhere out in the Southwest, you graze these animals for a year and a half or so. All they eat is their natural diet, the grass out on the range, out on the pasture.

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You, the rancher, typically, you have to pay attention to these animals. You have to treat them well. You’ve got to pay attention when they get sick. You’ve got to keep them away from predators. It is a form of animal husbandry, this part of the beef animal’s life.

Okay. When you’re in a business as a rancher, you’ve got expenses; you’ve got to sell these animals at a certain point. They’re usually sold at a year and a half year old. You take the animals to the auction barn to sell them. When you get there, there’s only a couple of buyers, the big JBS, the Brazilian firm that’s now bought out a large part of the beef industry in the U.S., some are like Cargill or Archer Daniels Midland, these big buyers. There are only a few of them at the auction barn, and they basically offer you a low price for your cattle. They offer you as low a price as they possibly can. But here you are. You have no choice. You have to sell to these cartels, essentially. There goes the animal.

If you ask the rancher what happens next to the animal, they don’t really like to talk about that so much, because it’s nothing like the life that the animal had under your care as a rancher, grazing out there. These animals are then put into trucks. They’re brought to these incredible feedlots, which are animal factories, where they’re not roaming on grass. They’re stuck in a pen. The idea is to stuff these animals full of grain to fatten them up as soon as possible, to make them as fat as possible.

JM: Excuse me for interrupting. It’s not just any grain. It’s GMO grain.

RC: It’s GMO grain.

JM: Loaded with glyphosate. Yeah.
And they have hormone implants in their ears to make them grow faster. It’s a horrible situation. The reason why it’s illegal for journalists or concerned citizens to be able to go in and film in these giant feedlots is because the industry, Cargill or JBS and the rest, they don’t want you to see the filth and the cruelty that’s involved in this.

So okay, you fatten up the animals on grain. You’re making them sick as you’re doing that. They’re developing in their intestines things like E.coli 0157H, which is a virulent pathogen that could literally kill you if you consume that.

Anyway, they fatten them up and they send them to these – there are only a few dozen of mega slaughterhouses around the country. These are hellish places that, again, you’re not going to see pictures of these because the industry has made it a crime in many states to take pictures of what’s going on. It’s a horrible situation in the slaughterhouse. The workers are immigrant workers typically, who don’t have citizenship papers. Why is this? Because U.S. citizens will not take this kind of jobs. They would not work under these conditions.

The poor animals are crammed in here, but also the workers in the slaughterhouse, it’s a horrible situation. They have terrible health problems, terrible psychological problems. They’re underpaid and overworked. What comes out on the other end is some meat that might appear to be cheap in the supermarket, or if you drive up to a fast-food restaurant like McDonald’s or Burger King and order a burger. It seems like, “Hey. This is pretty cheap.”

But it’s not cheap in terms of what does it do to your health to eat beef, especially overconsume beef like Americans do, that comes from factory farms. It clogs up your veins. You’re ingesting these pesticides residues, these hormone residues. You end up supersizing yourself. You end up looking like the average American does nowadays, which is not really good.

Yeah, you’ve got your cheap burger. You’ve got your cheap steak. But you have damaged your health. That’s going to be very costly over time. You also contributed to a massive supply chain damage to the environment.

These GMOs, the GMO corn and soybeans that make up the bulk of the feed in the feedlots, they have been sprayed with a horrendous amount of chemicals. They’ve been dosed with chemical fertilizers. The industry, these factory farms are the No. 1 contributors to water pollution. That’s why we’ve got the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico and Puget Sound and all over now. You’re part of a long chain of animal cruelty, exploitation of workers, destruction of the environment, the GMO explosion out there. It’s not even good for you in the long run.

This paradigm is going to end. But we need for more awareness on consumers, and we need for more ranchers to be able to be directly coming to contact with consumers who want to buy their products so that they can cut out the cartel middlemen, JBS, Cargill and the rest.

Yes. You’re just not here standing on a soapbox warning the world about this. You’re taking an active position in seeking to develop prototypes and alternatives to this model. You have a farm. Many people may not realize this down in Mexico that I’ve actually visited in the
past. It’s really matured quite a bit since I’ve been there. Why don’t you give us an update on what you’re doing to serve as a model alternative to what you just described?

**RC:** Yes. Mercola and Organic Consumers Association were founding members of an international network called Regeneration International, which is trying to replace, among other things, this factory farm system with a natural humane system, whereby herbivores are raised on grass. The other horrible part of the factory farm system worldwide of course includes chickens and pigs as well. Americans actually consume more chicken meat than they do beef nowadays, chicken and turkeys.

Again, these animals, the standard worldwide and in the U.S., are these factory farms. If you could imagine a chicken house where the chickens never see the light of day, where there are lights on inside 24/7, where hundreds of thousands of chickens are confined together in this same house. That’s the norm. That’s not the way things used to be.

We’ve developed on our farm, our Via Organica farm down here in the high desert of Central Mexico, a system based on the traditional raising of poultry. In the first phase of our project, we’ve got a couple of thousand laying hens. Our chickens live outside all day in a two-and-a-half-acre paddock where we planted 400 olive trees and other crops in there.

The chickens are roaming around all day, pecking in the dirt, doing the things that they like to do. They’re also getting a good part of their nutrition, about 20 percent of their diet from the worms and the insects and the other food while they’re foraging. At night or at sunset, they come into the chicken house, which is where they roost and where they lay their eggs. Their diet, when they’re in the chicken house and the feed that supplements what they can forage, is grown by farmers that we work with to be regenerative.

Regenerative just means the next stage of organic. In other words, we’re helping these farmers grow the grains so that the chickens eat the corn, the barley, the wheat, the alfalfa – what is the other one? I forget what the fifth grain is we typically use.

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**JM:** Barley?

**RC:** Yes. We’re helping these farmers farm these grains organically and regeneratively. That is they’re not GMO seeds. They’re seeds that have been saved. They’re traditional seeds. They are not plowing up the land, killing all the beneficial soil microorganisms the way they have.

We have a special plow that was developed in Australia that’s now spreading all across the world. It’s called a Keyline plow. It doesn’t disturb the earth the way that traditional plows do. It creates an environment in your field to where when it rains, there’s a built-in filtration of the rain into the soil. It turns the soil into like a sponge and so on. There are no chemical fertilizers. We work with the farmers to be able to have natural compost, which is made from basically gritty material, animal manure mixture, and spread on the farmlands.
This whole system, again from the health perspective, if you look at our eggs, one thing you notice is, “Oh my goodness, the yolk is bright orange.” You taste our eggs, they taste really good. If you do a nutritional analysis of these eggs and compare these to the factory farmed eggs in the grocery store, there’s a world of difference. If animals can live outside or live in a natural environment and exercise their natural behaviors, it ends up being a superior product.

Now, these olive trees that I mentioned that provide the habitat outdoors, because chickens like to have bushes like hazelnuts in Northern Minnesota or down here, olive trees, because their instinct is they’re looking up for predators in the sky: hawks, eagles and so on. They want to have bushes or trees to duck under. They feel safer. They’ll stay outside all day. But they’re having an amazing impact on our olive trees. They’re like the workers in the vineyard, the chickens, because they’re fertilizing the trees. It means that we don’t have to use any fertilizer to make the olive trees thrive.

They’re also pecking around. They’re getting the insects that might turn into pests for the trees. What you notice, whether you’re growing corn or hazelnuts or sunflowers, which is what we’re doing in Minnesota with this type of project or if you’re growing olives or pistachios or some of the other varieties. If you’re growing coffee in Central America or the highlands of Mexico, you notice these plants are growing a lot faster when they have the chickens underneath them taking care of them. It’s an amazing thing.

If you’re a small farmer, it’s very difficult to make a living off just your eggs. But if you’ve got another cash crop in the paddock where the chickens roam, you’re going to be bringing in twice as much money over time. You’re not going to have the problems that if you were just growing the olive trees without the animals under them and so on. We’re seeing this in Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania or White Oak Farms in Georgia. We’re seeing it now.

We’re about to start our program with pigs. Pigs like to live outdoors also. They shouldn’t be penned up. Their natural habitats are forests. They’re actually good for forests and trees. This rooting around that they like to do has a beneficial impact. The same thing with sheep.

Sheep, if they can graze properly that is not overgrazed an area or undergrazed an area, you find that the pastures thrive, the perennial plants thrive. I don’t know. If you’ve never seen or heard of 25 or 50 little pigs running around free in a pasture, having the time of their lives, rolling around in their little mud holes and expressing their natural behavior, it’s just like this is totally different. It’s so cruel, the system of factory farming. Not only is it cruel, it’s bad for our health. It’s bad for the economy.

We’ve got 500 million small farms in the world. Most of these farmers are really struggling because they can’t compete with this cheap toxic food that the factory farm system and the GMO companies have thrown out. But there’s a new way forward. Five or 10 percent of the population are going to continue to reject factory farmed food in a really conscious ethical way by being vegans. That’s one way to not participate in this factory farmed GMO system.

**JM:** You were a vegan for a number of years.
Yes. I was not a vegan. I was a vegetarian for 40 years, between 1970 and 2010. I was a vegetarian until I had some ranchers in New Mexico explain to me this whole system of holistic management and rotational grazing, 100 percent grass-fed. I had understood this system, but they pointed out to me and they said, “Hey. You’re an environmentalist, right? You’re an animal welfare proponent, right? You want to try and reverse climate change by getting all that excess carbon from the atmosphere back into the ground where it used to be.”

This rancher said, because he was trying to hand me a plate of some of his beef, he said, “You’re not any of those things. You’re a hypocrite, Ronnie.” Because conscious consuming in a moderate level of meat and animal products, where the animals have been raised humanely, where they’ve been raised naturally, where the end product, the food, is good for your health. By consuming grass-fed meat and dairy, it is actually very good for your health. It’s very hard to be that healthy being a vegan. Some people say it’s impossible, but it’s good for your health. It’s good for the environment.

Yeah, these animals, at the last instant of their life, when they’re sacrificed for our food, that’s not a good moment. But I mean, humans, we’re all going to have a bad moment at the end of our lives. We’re going to physically die. When we’re in the ground, guess what’s going to happen? The little animals eventually are going to eat us. It’s all part of this great chain of being. It’s natural.

This is starting to happen. There are vegans starting to understand, like Dr. Bronner’s company. David Bronner is the CEO. He’s a firm supporter of the food movement like Dr. Mercola has been. David’s been a vegan for many years, but he’s coined this term – instead of vegetarian – “regenetarian.” A regenetarian is a person who never, ever, ever, eats factory farmed meat or dairy products, right? Just like a vegan. But a regenetarian will consume grass-fed beef, grass-fed dairy and other products. We’re talking about fish here, too.

Most of the fish in the world is now coming from these factory farm fish operations, [which] are horrible industrial trawlers in the oceans that are ripping up everything and killing everything in sight. Wild Alaskan salmon, the type that Dr. Mercola offers for sale, this is a totally different situation.

A conscious consumer who wants to preserve their health, but also knows that we want to preserve the health of the planet. We want regular rainfall. We want climate to be normal again. We have to become regenetarians.

I never eat meat or animal products in a restaurant unless that restaurant has on the menu and has a convincing story that this is grass-fed or genuinely pastured or so on. As soon as enough people start doing that, this system is going to change.

One of the founding members of Regeneration International recently got called into a meeting in Chicago to meet with the CEO’s staff of McDonald’s. In that conversation, McDonald’s admitted that this horrible factory farm system, which supplies 100 percent of their meat and their animal products – their milk, their ice cream, their cheese – that this system is not viable.
But what McDonald’s said is, “Look. We’re a publicly traded corporation. We can be sued by our stockholders if we don’t maximize profit. Not over the long run, but every three months, we’ve got to show more profit. We don’t know how to switch. On the scale that we operate, where are we going to get the grass-fed meat? Where are we going to get the grass-fed dairy in the kind of quantities we need?” But they have admitted that.

I had a conversation with some of the top people at Purdue, the meat company famous for chicken production, but they’re diversified into other meat. They also have admitted that, “Well, okay. We’re getting rid of the added antibiotics in our chicken, but we don’t know how we’re going to replace this factory farmed paradigm.”

Our answer to these executives is, “You know what? You’re trapped in this system that you’re not going to be able to get out of unless you break some of the rules. You cannot continue to try to maximize profit every three months and do the right thing.” The nice thing is that we said, “We’re going to help you because consumers are going to boycott all of the factory farmed stuff. You’re not going to have any choice but to switch over over time. Your shareholders, like the shareholders of Burger King and all of the rest, they’re all going to be facing the same situation.”

They’re looking at their bottom line right now and they’re seeing, “Oh my God. Millennials aren’t buying our Kentucky fried chicken anymore at the rate that the previous generation did. Our bottom line is slipping, slipping, slipping.”

Our job as natural health advocates or as organic consumer advocates or animal rights advocates or advocates for healthy water, air and a normal climate, normal rainfall patterns, our job is to put our money where our ethics lie. Every time you pull out the wallet to buy something, think before you buy it. Think before you put something in your mouth. If that restaurant doesn’t have anything on the menu in terms of meat and animal products and fish except factory farmed, then pretend you’re vegan for a day. Don’t order that stuff on the restaurant menus.

Americans spend, we only spend about 10 percent of our average household income on food, which is ridiculously low compared to what the highest quality, most nutritious food would cost. We should be spending twice as much on food and a lot less on some of the other things we waste our money on. But we need to vote with our knives and forks. You do a lot more damage to the environment and the climate, for example, with your knives and forks if you’re not thinking than you do behind the wheel of your car, guzzling fossil fuels. We need to realize that the No. 1 impact on our environment, on the climate, on our health in this country, is the food we eat. No one can make you eat unhealthy food.

If you don’t know how to cook, which most people compared to our grandparents don’t know how to, we have to reskill ourselves. We have to learn how to cook. I mean it’s fun to hang out in the kitchen, to realize, “Oh. I’m making myself a meal with organic and grass-fed ingredients that will cost 100 dollars at a fine restaurant. Here, I just made dinner for a couple of us for 10 bucks.” We can do that.

There is one problem with the fact that cheap food, cheap fast food, cheap convenient food, which is poisoning us and poisoning the environment. It does cost [more]. Organic food, grass-
fed food cost more than this cheap food. Why does it cost more? Because you can’t have a system unless you pay the farmers and the ranchers enough to do it right. If you want farmers and ranchers to give you cheap food, that’s the feedlots. That’s the factory farm system. That’s the GMOs. That’s the fact that every bite you take has pesticide residues in it. Every sip of milk you take has antibiotics, growth hormones and breakdown products from herbicides.

**JM:** Ronnie, let’s get back to the update on the GMO movement in the United States, or at least those opposed to the introduction of GMOs and the use of them. Last August, the DARK Act was passed. I’m wondering, especially in light of President Trump being elected in November, if that’s had an impact in what your current take is on the passage of that legislation and how it’s impacting our ability to be effective in this area?

**RC:** Yeah. I think we saw with the Congress that we have now, it’s not that much a difference under Trump than it was last August under the Obama administration. The U.S. Congress doesn’t seem to care that 90 percent of consumers want to know whether their food has been genetically engineered or not, or has ingredients. Industry spent hundreds of millions of dollars to try to stop labeling, which most industrialized countries in the world have.

Last August, what happened was in July, Vermont state law for mandatory labeling came into effect on July the 1st. It forced a lot of major food companies around the country to start labeling their stuff as whether it was genetically engineered or not. I mean big companies, like General Mills, Kellogg’s, even Starbucks on some of their ingredients. The Vermont law, under our federal system, states used to have the right to pass their laws regarding labeling, right? Companies like Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola that sell in Vermont, they didn’t want to label. But they faced the choice. They can either stop selling their products on July 1st in Vermont, or start to label their products.

What these companies said was, “You know what? We’re going to buy Congress to say that even though we have a 100-year tradition of states’ rights and being able to label foods and deal with a lot of food safety issues at the state level, we’re going to eliminate that.” That’s what the DARK Act did. It said, “You know what? States no longer have the right to require mandatory labeling of genetically engineered ingredients.” That’s it. The Vermont law was reversed.

They replaced it with this nonsensical thing. They said, “Oh. We’re going to put this kind of special barcodes someday, a few years down the road, these quick response (QR) codes, to where if you have a scanner in a grocery store on your smartphone and you have internet access on the phone and you’ve got time, use your smartphone. You can go to some website where maybe, somewhere in the fine print, it might tell you Coca-Cola is sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup that’s genetically engineered.” The only difference under Trump, looks like that we’re not even going to have these QR codes, which were ridiculous anyway.

Where does this leave us as consumers? I think there’s a growing recognition among conscious consumers in this country that right now, we can’t count on the Congress. We can’t count on these so-called regulatory agencies, like the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), or the United States Environmental Protection
Agency (EPA), or the Federal Trade Commission. These people are in the pockets of the 1 percent. They do what their financial backers tell them to do.

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We’re left with our power in the marketplace. That is, they can’t pass a law that tells you what to do when you pull out your wallet. We still have free choice to choose organic or grass-fed foods or non-GMO foods in the marketplace. What’s interesting is that the same number of people, or even increasing numbers, are concerned about these issues of health in the environment. People are still voting against GMOs in the marketplace.

All of these companies that started to label, because they thought the Vermont law was going to go into effect and not be killed by a federal law, they’re still labeling because they’re afraid to take off the labels that they started putting on there. These companies, like Coca-Cola, that never labeled in the first place are, of course, they’re going to stay true to what they are.

But the important thing is that consumer power is more important than ever, consumer education. If we keep voting with our dollars in the marketplace, we’re gradually going to hand breach the availability of healthier organic grass-fed foods. At the rate we’re going now, most food in the United States will be organic within three decades. It’s taken us three decades to get to the 5 to 10 percent range. Most of the food will be organic and grass-fed within 30 years. However, when you look at our public health crisis and our climate crisis and all these other things that the economic crisis in rural areas, we can’t wait 30 years.

Like Organic Consumers Association (OCA), our consumer revolution platform for the next four years, during the Trump administration, is instead of just letting organic grow by 50 percent, which it will grow at current rates of growth, we say we’re going to double organic sales in the next four years. We’re going to quadruple sales of grass-fed. We’re going to speed up to reach the tipping point of 10 to 15 percent of our food supply being organic or grass-fed. Because once we hit the tipping point, it’s going to accelerate much faster. That’s our answer to the gridlock in Washington, to the failure of federal government.

Let’s get active in the local and state level where we have more power, but let’s intensify our impact in the marketplace where no one can tell us what to do. We’re going to bring about our revolution in health and nutrition in the marketplace if they won’t let us do it with public policy.

**JM:** Yes. The corporations clearly have tied up the federal regulatory agencies and essentially shut off the ability for the non-discerning consumer to understand whether or not their food is contaminated with GMOs. As you mentioned, 90 percent of the people don’t want it, but they’re just not able to identify it easily without some conversant complex process.

Again, to reemphasize that, we don’t have to capitulate to this system. We have the power with our pocketbooks. We can vote for it and actually direct industry from the bottom up. Because if no one’s going to buy their product, then they’re really forced to seek other alternatives.

I’m excited to hear the advent of the increase in the penetration of organic into the marketplace. I’m wondering if you could talk a bit about biodynamic, which was started by Rudolf Steiner,
and how that’s starting to integrate and how that might even change or modify the organic standard.

RC: Yes. I mean Organic Consumers Association has always been aware of the fact that there are two different types of organic certification. There’s the USDA Organic (you’re familiar with those labels) on products. It’s got pretty good standards, but these are minimum USDA standards.

Ever since 1922, there’s been another kind of organic certification, which is called “Biodynamic,” based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. Biodynamic has always had the highest standards of organic certification in the world, even though a lot of those biodynamic products also say USDA certified or USDA Organic. If you see that Demeter sign or biodynamic or if it tells you it’s biodynamic, what you need to realize is this is absolutely Grade A+ Organic.

Now, we see a conversation because the grass-fed part, a lot of people didn’t understand the implications of 100 percent grass-fed until recently, the nutrition environmental and all of those. What we’re seeing is that American Grassfed Association and the Biodynamic Demeter certification, people are starting to get together.

What we’re seeing is that farmers, even those certified organic are deciding, “You know what? I’m going to go to the next stage. I’m going to go to the biodynamic or the regenerative stage, which in terms of animal husbandry, is the 100 percent grass-fed or the 100 percent pastured farm animals like pigs and chickens that eat grains, as well as grasses.”

I think biodynamic and regenerative are the wave of the future. We need to still seek out organic products, but more and more conscious consumers are realizing that if you’re buying a bottle of wine, look for the organic label on it, because that means it doesn’t have any added sulfides. It means that the farmer was really conscientious in the way they raised those grapes. But look for the biodynamic label as well. In OCA and Mercola, we’re really happy to be working with the next stage of organics, which is biodynamic and grass-fed.

JM: Okay. You had mentioned earlier and commented on OCA’s strategy in the next three years. You’ve done a lot of work in the last 30. But the next three years, from 2017 to 2020, what are some of the specifics on how you expect to impact the choices that we’re making?

RC: Okay. With GMOs for example, most of the movement focus their attention over the last 20 years on GMOs in human food, processed food and the few number of products – whole food, the tomatoes, squash and the few things that are genetically engineered. We put almost all of our attention on that part of GMOs, and yet that’s only 20 percent of GMOs going to the human food chain. Most of it, 40 percent, goes into animal feed for factory farms.

Again, the only way to get at that is to stop buying factory farmed food. Then 40 percent more goes into ethanol, which is this crazed idea that it’s environmentally sound and good for the climate to produce an additive for gasoline basically from GMO corn. Most of us don’t realize you drive up to the gas station, and unless you’re buying premium gas, you’ve got ethanol in
your tank. Monsanto just made money off you driving your car. The more you drive, the less you bicycle and walk and carpool, the more money Monsanto makes.

And also clothing. People don’t understand that 95 percent of the clothing in America is GMO cotton from Monsanto. You may think you’re boycotting Monsanto’s food, but if you’re going out and buying clothes without thinking about it – my shirt today is organic, my T-shirt’s organic. This is wool. My jeans are organic. My underwear is organic. My socks are organic. I’m trying to consciously fight against Monsanto with everything I do, not just what I eat.

We’ve got to expand into the full realm of GMOs. Even more importantly, we need to stop talking about GMOs as if it’s some abstract technology that poses this kind of really-hard-to-understand danger, gene splicing, disruption of the genome and all that – GMOs and the toxic chemicals that always accompany them. There is no GMO crop that isn’t sprayed with large amounts of poisonous chemicals, usually Monsanto’s Roundup or glyphosate. Or else it’s impregnated with a poison, like the Bacillus thuringiensis (BT) toxin in the plant that expresses itself in every cell of the plant.

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When we’re talking about pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, we’re talking about GMO plants. There’s no way to fight against GMOs unless we’re fighting at the same time against chemical-intensive, energy-intensive agriculture and factory farms. We want to widen the net.

Mercola and some of us have helped set up the lab where we can do cutting edge testing of food products and show the poisons in there. [In] OCA, we’ve sued companies in the marketplace repeatedly this year. Eight lawsuits we’ve filed. We’re tired of companies calling their stuff “natural” or calling their stuff “free-range” or “pasture-raised” when it’s not. This is against the law in certain states of the U.S. to lie like this. It’s against the law in California. It’s against the law in Washington D.C., Massachusetts. We’re going aggressively out for people. But it’s still the same idea.

You are the active agent. You can choose. You choose the kind of clothes you wear. You choose the kind of food you eat. You choose the kind of issues that you work around. We can make a big change. We do need policy change as well. I mean, how come France – their organic grew 20 percent last year. The U.S. grew 11.5 percent. It’s very simple.

The French government understands the importance of moving as quickly as possible to organic. They passed some laws in France. They said, “You know what? We’re going to start paying farmers who will stop using pesticides. We will pay them to do the right thing.” Instead of like the U.S. system where they take our tax payers’ money and pay farmers to do the wrong thing. In France, they’re paying farmers to stop using pesticides. They’re paying farmers to stop using chemical fertilizers and to start using compost. They passed a law that said school food should be purchased – At least 40 percent of it needs to be organic and purchased from local farmers.

I mean what kind of rules do we have regarding [this]? We have the worst school lunch programs in the entire industrialized world. Our food stamp program for poor people was
basically junk food that the companies would have disposed of, but they get a tax break for giving us their factory-farmed cheese and milk, and so on and so forth.

We do need to change policies as well as the marketplace. But looking at the federal government, our best way to influence public policy is to get involved at the local level – city council, county board, state legislature, our school boards. We have some power there. That’s why Organic Consumers Association and a bunch of our allies are having these house party meetings on March the 20th across the United States. We’ve already got about 400 of them lined up.

We’re telling people, “Look. The food movement, the natural health movement, the environmental movement, the movement that cares about animal welfare, the church and [inaudible 54:09] movements, we need to start getting together, meet one another at the local level. Let’s talk about what our groups are doing.”

The food issue is not some separate issue over here and the natural health issue over here. We’ve got big corporations trying to stamp out natural health just like we’ve got big corporations trying to stamp out organic and grass-fed. Divided, they can conquer us. But if we start coming together in the simplest things, it’s just to start talking together, figuring out what’s happening locally. In Minneapolis or Duluth or wherever you live, Washington D.C., and how can we as citizens become more effective?

I mean if the food movement united with these other movements, they couldn’t have passed the DARK Act even at the federal level. But because it was just the 30, 40 million people who were most conscientious about what they buy, that wasn’t enough to scare the hell out of the politicians to do the right thing. If we’re going to get involved politically, and I do think we have to, let’s get involved where it makes a difference right now, which is the local level.

Let’s understand that what we do in the marketplace, whether it’s the Bush administration, the Obama administration, the Trump administration, these people are not determining your food choices. These people are not forcing you to consume dangerous Big Pharma drugs.

Get educated. Take control of your health. Take control of your diet. Meet up with the people in your local community who feel the same way. We can have, down the road, the kind of democracy that people have dreamed about for several hundreds of years. We’ve never had it but it doesn’t mean that we can’t get it down the road.

**JM:** Alright. Thank you so much for sharing with us the updates and parroting your perspective on what is currently happening and what will be happening and what you can do. I really appreciate that and everything you’ve done and will continue to do.

**RC:** Thank you, Dr. Mercola, and all of your team for the amazing educational work that you’ve done, and for your support for the food and natural health movement. We couldn’t do it without you.

**JM:** It’s about this alliance that you’ve talked about. It’s collaboration. Collectively, we would never beat them. We have to collaborate. We have to join forces. I’m just beyond delighted to be
able to collaborate with your group and all the wonderful work you’ve done over the last few decades.

I just wanted to emphasize a few points that you’ve touched on, and then we’ll sign off. As we’re recording this earlier this week, reports are out that this is the first time in the recent past that the average lifespan of the United States has actually decreased. It’s the only country in the developed world where this is happening. The studies that reported this did not look into it, but I’m absolutely convinced that our emphasis on factory farming would play the large role in this decline in our lifespan.

Additionally, it’s not just a selfish thing to pursue this path. We are seeking to have healthy food in GMO. It’s not just for the animals. It’s actually for our future generations too, because if we persist in this industrial factory farming model, we will decimate the top soil. We are causing potentially irreparable environmental damage. If we don’t leave the infrastructure for future generations, how can they possibly grow food?

This is a very serious issue and I’m glad so many of you are appreciating that and really taking a large part in the effort to do this practice and really vote with your pocketbooks, make a conscious decision, take the approach that Dr. Bronner has described, which is be regenerous. Don’t eat food if it’s not in a regenerative agriculture movement. Choose something else. Most of the vegetables are. At least there are healthier regenerative approach. Choose to avoid meat if it’s not regeneratively grown or sustainably grown in the AGA, American Grassfed Association, certified.

Thank you for everything you’re doing. Let’s support Ronnie. This is GMO Awareness Week. Let’s get behind him because for every dollar that you donate to this campaign, we are going to match that because we believe so strongly in the work that Ronnie is doing. Thanks again, Ronnie. I appreciate everything.

RC: Thank you.

[END]