

***Learning Runs Through Classroom Debates:  
What Debates Can Teach Us About Sharing  
the Agricultural Message***

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North American Colleges & Teachers of Agriculture

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SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Introduction

- Virginia farm girl
- Virginia Tech &  
Southside Virginia Community College
- My life's work....agriculture
- One concern....people's misperceptions of  
our industry

# What comes to mind when you hear agriculture?

- Grandparents from a farm? Parents? Yourself?
- What percentage of the U.S. population farms?

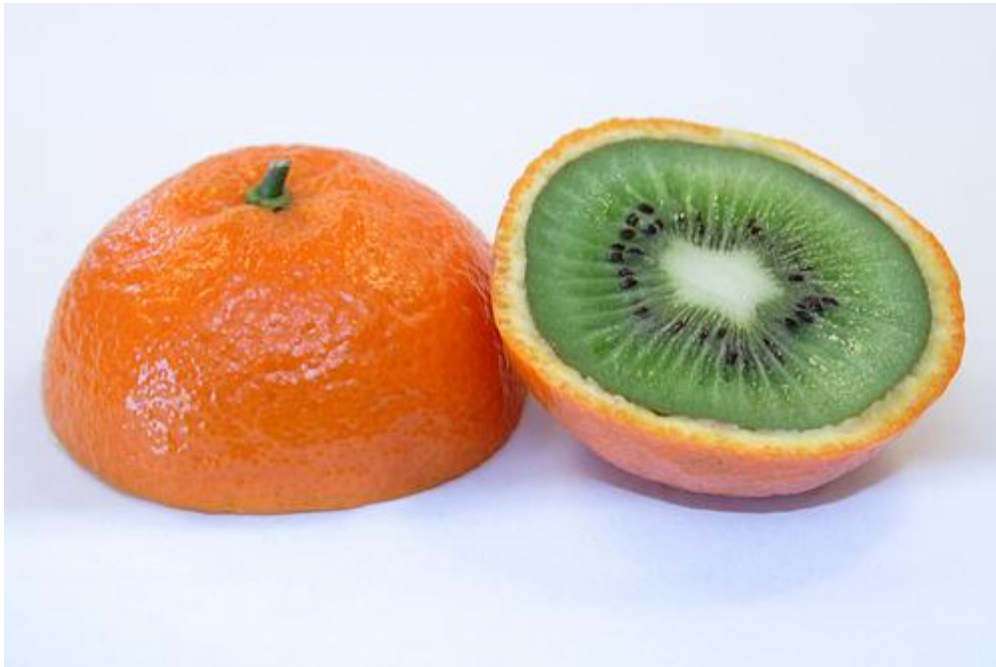
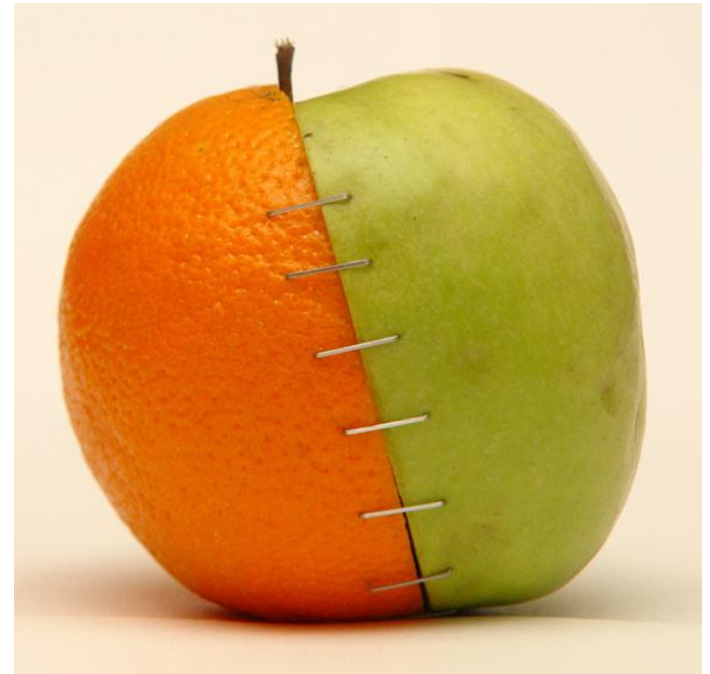


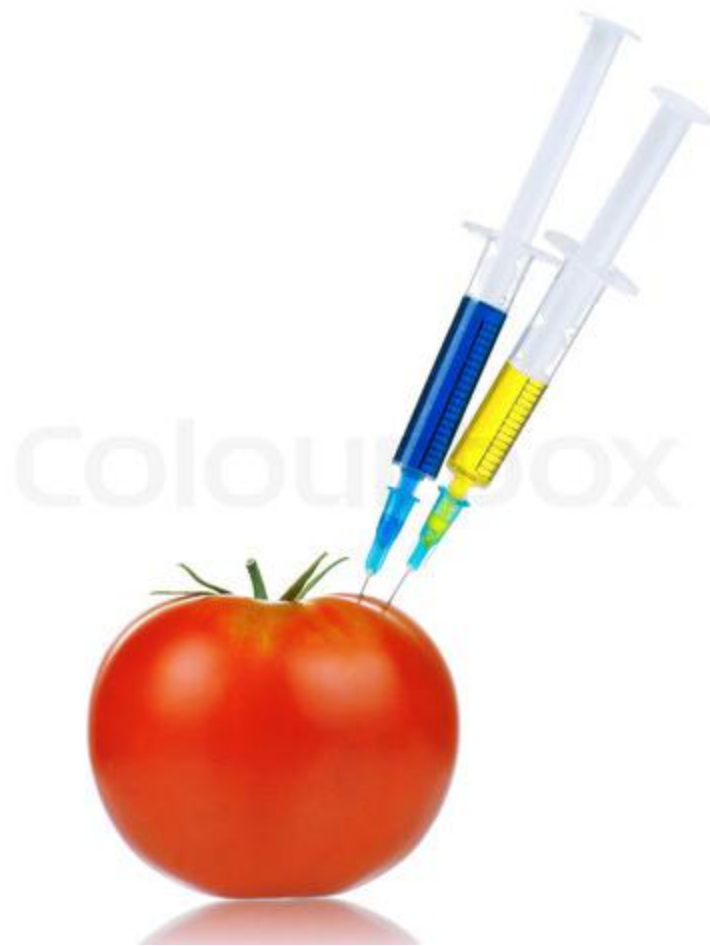
When the general public hears *agriculture*,  
what comes to their minds ?

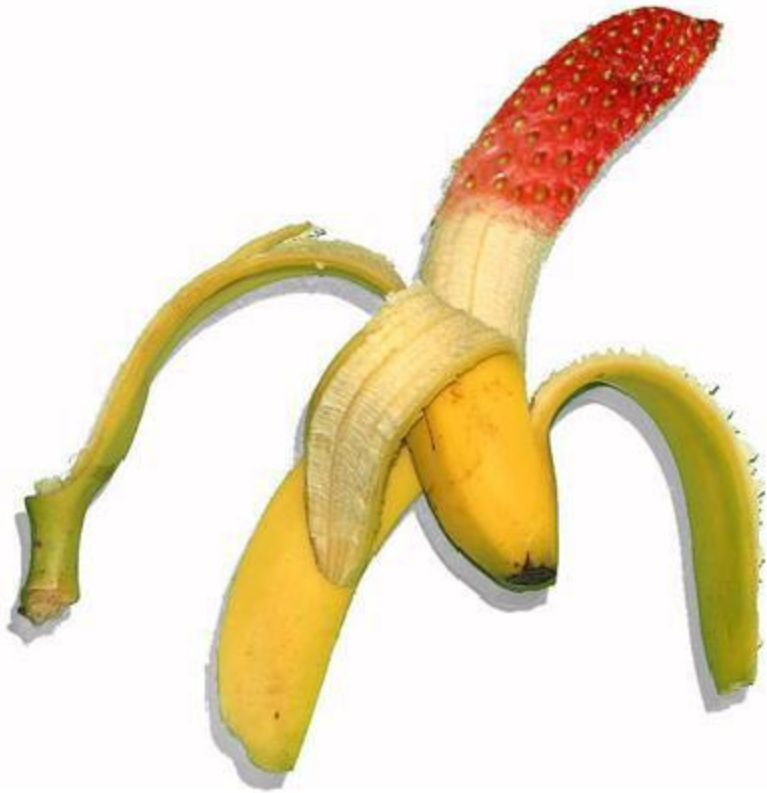


Perceptions run deep...what can we as teachers do to help overcome negative perception of our industry?













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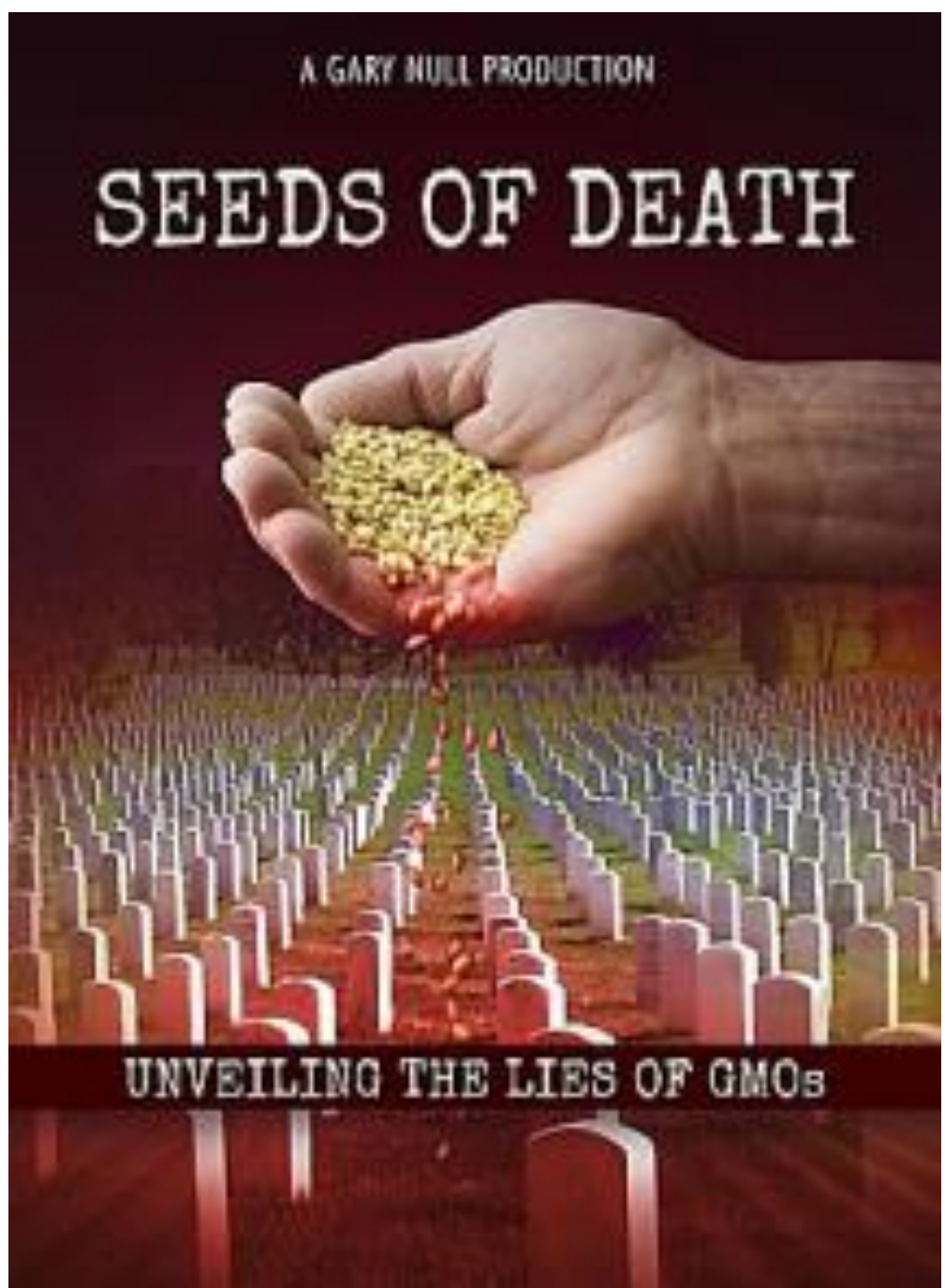
# The Risks of GMOs

We've got the studies to prove it >



**5 EASY WAYS TO**  
**Avoid GMO's**  
**at the Grocery Store**





# Debates as a learning tool and to help with the agriculture message

- Setting: graduate ag marketing course, Fall 2013
- Small (and captive) sample size of 14 students



# Debates as a learning tool and to help with the agriculture message

- Measures:
  - Knowledge of GMOs pre- & post-debate
  - Perception of GMOs pre- & post-debate



# Knowledge of GMOs pre- & post-debate

	Pre	Post
Very little knowledge	29	0
Somewhat knowledgeable	64	50
Extremely Knowledgeable	7	50
Expert level of knowledge	0	0

# Current opinion of GMOs pre- & post-debate

	Pre	Post
Extremely anti-GMO	0	0
Somewhat anti-GMO	43	29
No opinion	14	0
Somewhat pro-GMO	43	64
Extremely pro-GMO	0	7



# Follow-up study by a former student, Kevin Kidd (SVCC & Virginia State University)

- 103 respondents (via link on Facebook)
- Perceptions of GMOs, before and after reading information on GMOs

Plus...

- Knowledge level of GMOs
- Information that respondents would find persuasive
- Preferred sources to learn more about GMOs



# Self-reported Knowledge of GMOs

Level of knowledge	% reporting
No knowledge	16
Very little knowledge	48
Moderately knowledgeable	24
Very knowledgeable	11
Expert amount of knowledge	1

# Which describes GMOs?

Characteristic	% selecting
Using growth hormones in animals	53
Injecting insecticides into plants	37
Feeding animals substances not normally in their diet	27
Feeding animals feed that includes antibiotics	23

# Current opinion of GMOs

	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Extremely anti-GMO	11	5
Somewhat anti-GMO	22	27
No opinion	48	22
Somewhat pro-GMO	16	33
Extremely pro-GMO	3	13

What does our industry tend to emphasize when discussing GMOs?

What matters to the general public?

# Information that would be most persuasive

Type of information	% ranking this #1
Food-safety focused	56
Environmental impact	21
Nutrition-focused	7
Cost or price-focused	5
Yield or productivity-focused	2
Nothing...I know all I need to	3
Other	5

# Sources for information

Source	% choosing source
Government sources (ex: FDA, EPA)	59
University researchers	56
General websites about GMOs	34
Farmers who grow GMOs	28
News media	17
Food companies that use GMOs	14
Seed companies that provide GMOs	14
Local extension agent	8

# The Take-home Message

- People's minds can be changed
- The information they want is not always the information we provide
- We are viewed as a credible source for information
- We can help educate!





Proud to lead  
SVCC's agribusiness program  
& help educate the next generation,  
as well as consumers in our community

- Agribusiness is the country's #1 industry
- Agribusiness is Virginia's #1 industry
- Agribusiness is Southside's #1 industry
- Agribusiness at SVCC allowed me to come home!

# And there's no place like home!





Happy & proud to be a part of  
agriculture & to be in Southside Virginia

**Thank you for sharing today.**

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