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NY Changing Culture Examiner

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Fear of a GM Planet IV: The Future of Food

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Why won't they at least listen?
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During the week during of immersion in this topic, I came across work done by Pamela Ronald and Raoul Adamchak, known as the *Romeo and Juliet of academic agriculture*. Both work at UC Davis. She is Professor of Plant Pathology and he teaches organic production practices and manages the certified organic [Market Garden](#) at its student farm. Both are top notch in their fields .

They are big proponents of the using organic and conventional farming methods in combination with GM as a means of creating sustainable, environmentally friendly farming. Their book, *Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food*. A review at [organicgardening.com](#) says the book is "interspersed with nuggets of science, home made recipes (really) and anecdotes."

The duo is also featured in an online video. It is a talk they gave at The Long Now Foundation in San Francisco and is called [Organically Grown and Genetically engineered](#).

Now, you would think that being smart people, the AGMs would want to see what these people have to say. But you would think wrong. The issue is settled. GM is bad. No need to hear from these scientists. And then they point you to more pseudo-scientific articles that bolster their stance.

Ronald appeared on the TV show Dr. Oz last December to clear up some misconceptions and refute the worst "woo woo pseudoscience" but it was difficult. (That's right TV doctor who wears scrubs on his show is in the AGM camp.) As she wrote on her [blog](#), "It was a tough go, though, because one of the other panelists... with no discernible scientific or agricultural training... believes that eating GE crops causes infertility, organ damage and endocrine disruption. Of course, the scientific evidence for these statements is about as strong as saying that looking at carrots will give you brain tumors."

And was the anti-GM guest? None other than the yogic flying Jeffery Smith.

She also wrote, "What we do know is that after 14 years of consumption there has been not a single instance of harm to human health or the environment."

Wow. That's a pretty bold statement. Who is this woman anyway? According to her university bio, "Ronald was a Fulbright Fellow from 1984-1985, was

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named a Guggenheim Fellow in 2000. She is an elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a 2008 Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. In 2008 she and her colleagues were recipients of the [USDA 2008 National Research Initiative Discovery Award](#) for their work on submergence tolerant rice. In 2009, they were finalists for the [2009 World Technology Award for Environment](#) and nominees for the [Biotech Humanitarian Award](#). In 2009 she also received the [National Association of Science Writers Science in Society Journalism Award](#).

That submergence rice thing? She and her team developed a strain of rice that can withstand 17 days of flooding in places like Bangladesh. They spent 10 years working on it. In an interview in 2009 she had this to say about "unintended consequences" which AGMs always point out when discussing the issue. *"Everything that we eat today has been improved through some sort of breeding process. Any time you do this, you introduce not only the genes that you know, but some that are not characterized. Some of the risks with conventional breeding are that you introduce genes with unintended consequences."*

What? That can't be. Conventional breeding carries risks? Who knew? Scientists, that's who. They did *precision breeding*, which is the ability to introduce very specific genes into plants without the danger of other genes that might transfer over in conventional breeding.

Tomorrow: Q&A with Raoul Adamchak

Read earlier installments:

[Fear of a GM Planet: Frightened Villagers and pseudoscience](#)

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By **Bernie Mooney**
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Bernie considers himself a native New Yorker even though he wasn't born in the city. He's worked as a musician, freelance writer, neighborhood... [Read more](#)

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