

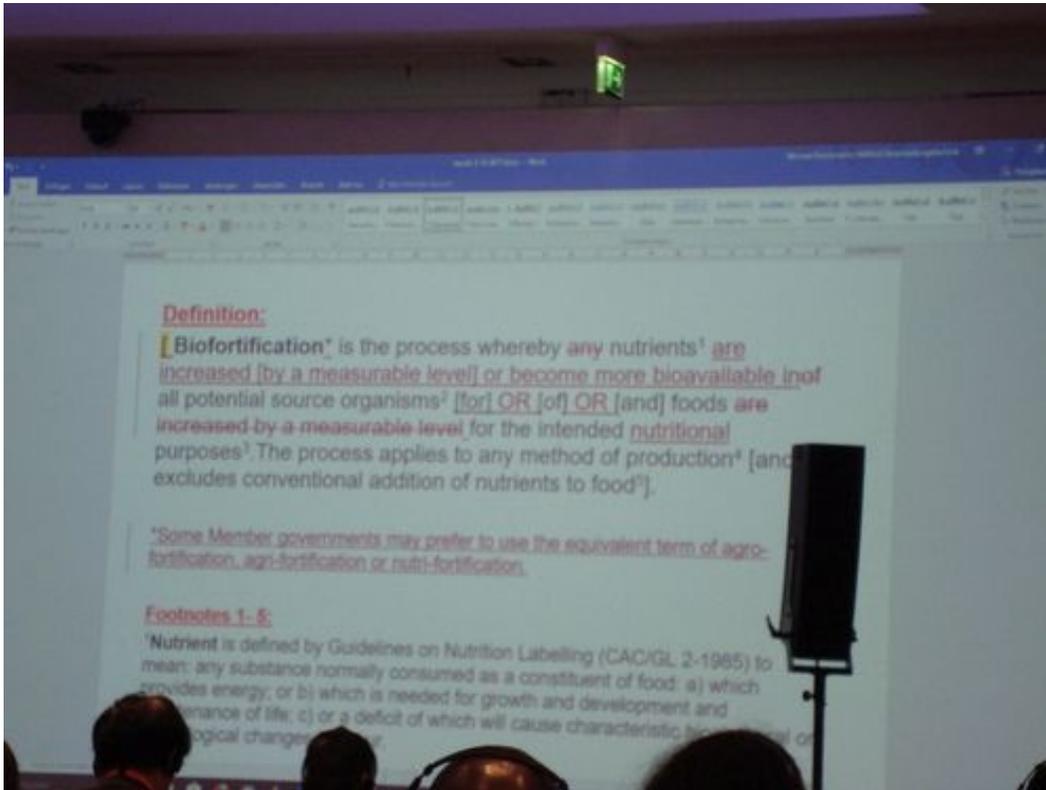
# Monsanto Uses Codex to Hide GMOs from Consumers

“Dishonest” and “disgraceful” – Monsanto attempts to gain backdoor entry for GE foods

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At the recent Codex meeting in Berlin, there was an attempt to define genetically engineered (GE) food ingredients as ‘biofortified’ and therefore mislead consumers. This contravened the original Codex mandate for defining biofortification. That definition is based on improving the nutritional quality of food crops through conventional plant breeding (not genetic engineering) with the aim of making the nutrients bioavailable after digestion. The attempt was thwarted thanks to various interventions, not least by the National Health Federation (NHF), a prominent health-freedom international non-governmental organization and the only health-freedom INGO represented at Codex. But the battle is far from over.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission’s Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) convened in Berlin during early December and drafts provisions on nutritional aspects for all foods. It also develops international guidelines and standards for foods for special dietary uses that will be used to facilitate standardized world trade.

Based upon previous meetings, the initial intention of the Committee was to craft a definition for biofortification that could then be used uniformly around the World. Biofortification originally referred to increasing certain vitamin and mineral content of basic food crops by way of cross-breeding, not genetic engineering, for example by increasing the vitamin or iron content of sweet potatoes so that malnourished populations would receive better nutrition.

However, according to president of the NHF, Scott Tips, Monsanto wants to redefine the definition to include GE ‘biofortified’ foods and it has seemingly influenced Codex delegates in that direction. Tips says, “I am sure that Monsanto would be thrilled to be able to market its synthetic products under a name that began with the word ‘bio’.”

This year’s CCNFSDU meeting witnessed a lively debate about biofortification. At the 2016 CCNFSDU meeting, chairwoman Pia Noble (married to a former Bayer executive) had opined that the definition should be as broad as possible and that recombinant technology should be included. By the 2017 meeting, the proposed definition had morphed to include GE foods.

## Deceptive marketing par excellence

The EU has raised a valid objection that “biofortification” would cause confusion in many European countries due to the widespread use of the word “bio” being synonymous with “organic.” Countries within the EU have been very vocal and support this position, arguing that the definition needs to be restrictive, not broad.

Including GE foods within any definition of biofortification risks consumer confusion as to whether they are purchasing organic products or something else entirely. “Monsanto seeks to cash in on the organic market with the loaded word ‘bio’,” argues Scott Tips.

At the Codex meeting in Berlin, Tips addressed the 300 delegates in the room. “Although NHF was an early supporter of biofortification, we have since come to see that the concept is in the process of being hijacked and converted from something good into something bad,” explained Tips.

He added that if Codex is to allow any method of production and any source to be part of the biofortification definition, it would be engaging in marketing deception of the worst sort.

As Steven Druker has shown in his book *Altered Genes, Twisted Truths*, GE foods should not even be on the commercial market, given the deceptions and bypassing of procedures that put them there in the first place. But now that they are on the market, most consumers want GE foods labelled. In the United States alone, some 90% of consumers want such labelling. The definition being proposed seeks to disguise GE foods under the term “biofortification.”

**“That is dishonest. It is disgraceful, and for all of those sincerely concerned with the credibility and transparency of Codex, you should absolutely and positively oppose this definition,” says Tips.**

The NHF feels that this is simply a strategy to gain a backdoor entry into countries for GE foods that are unneeded and unwanted. In his address to the assembled delegates, Tips added, “It is a very sad state of affairs where we have come to the point where we must manipulate our natural foods to provide better nutrition all because we have engaged in very poor agricultural practices that have seen a 50% decline in the vitamins and minerals in our foods over the last 50 years. We will not remedy poor nutrition by engaging in deceptive marketing practices and sleight of hand with this definition.”

The delegates to various Codex committees tend to be national regulatory bureaucrats and representatives from large corporations, including agritech giants like Monsanto. These interests have undue influence within Codex. Over the years, although heavily outnumbered at meetings, Scott Tips and his colleagues at the NHF have been tireless in their efforts to roll back undue corporate influence at Codex. Thanks to NHF and others urging the committee to adopt a clear, non-misleading definition that excluded GE foods, no final decision was taken on the definition of biofortification.

It is now left to the committee to resolve the matter at next year’s meeting or even the one thereafter.

## The National Health Federation

The National Health Federation is the only health-freedom organization accredited by the Codex Alimentarius Commission to participate at all Codex meetings. It actively shapes global policies for food, beverages, and nutritional supplements.

## Codex

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is run by the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization. Its some 27 committees establish uniform food-safety standards and guidelines for its member countries and promote the unhindered international flow of food goods and nutritional supplements.