

From: "Peter J. Moran" <pmoran@safnow.org>

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Subject: Concern about 5/10/15 Opinion Piece

To: adam.kushner@washpost.com, martin.baron@washpost.com,
letters@washpost.com, outlook@washpost.com

Dear Mr. Baron and Mr. Kushner,

On behalf of the entire floral industry, I must take issue with the opinion piece by Jennifer Grayson entitled "Flowers may be nice for Mom, but they're terrible for Mother Earth," which ran on May 10.

As the CEO of the Society of American Florists, which represents growers, wholesalers and florists, I have been to dozens of flower farms in Colombia, Ecuador, Holland and the United States. Flower growers – both domestically and off shore -- work hard to make environmental and social responsibility a priority, and are extremely frustrated when they see such accusations. Opinions are just that – opinions – but raise great concern when riddled with inaccuracies that are stated as fact. The blatant exaggeration and misinformation used in this opinion piece is irresponsible and, frankly, surprising to see in The Washington Post.

Where are the facts? For instance, for Ms. Grayson to claim that flowers "are saturated with a toxic cocktail of chemicals" is completely inaccurate and makes no sense. In reality, not only are pesticides costly for a business, but overuse would be harmful to the product. Actually, pesticide use in the floral industry has decreased dramatically over the last 15 years, as growers implement natural ways to control bugs – such as good bugs eating bad bugs or plant extracts that attract bugs.

It was good to see Ms. Grayson mention certification programs such as Florverde. Does she know that the majority of Colombian flower growers who export the vast majority of flowers to the U.S. are certified by Florverde, which has strict regulations on environmental and social responsibility? The Colombian flower industry – the source of most of the imported flowers -- is committed to sustainable farming and the environment through the minimal use of agricultural chemicals, approved for use in the U.S. and Europe. Only products registered with the Colombian Agricultural Institute and licensed by the Ministry of Health may be used. I don't know where Ms. Grayson gets her information, but the two pesticides she mentions have not been used in the U.S., Colombia, or anywhere that we know of, for decades.

Unfortunately, the outdated and unwarranted accusations we see in the media are perpetuated by anecdotal, non-fact based information, often planted by others who have an agenda to paint a negative picture of the industry. However, it was disheartening to see it happen in a credible news outlet such as The Washington Post.

Should you ever have an interest in visiting flower farms domestically and off shore to get an accurate portrayal of the floral industry as a whole, we would be happy to put you in touch with growers who can provide you with the expertise you need. I can assure you, it is an experience you won't soon forget.

In the meantime, we hope all of the mothers who were fortunate enough to receive flowers for Mother's Day are enjoying the powerful mood enhancing effects of happiness and well being that this beautiful product brings.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Moran

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