



# Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) Labeling

## Background

In recent years, there has been a tremendous amount of interest in GMO foods and ingredients in the modern food supply, including its impact on the labeling and manufacturing of food.

Many natural food consumers counter FDA's safety evaluations which have allowed the use of GMO foods, with concerns about the potential allergenicity and toxicity of GMO foods, and their long-term impact on the food supply and environment.

The ongoing GMO debate has spurred nearly half of U.S. States to introduce GMO food labeling legislation – Vermont being the most prominent in the debate. These piecemeal labeling laws could require food producers and processors to comply with numerous, and potentially conflicting, State regulations. Inconsistent laws or policies create fodder for private enforcement, as evidenced by recent waves of GMO and natural food labeling litigation. Private enforcement cases generally drive up food prices over time.

A well-crafted Federal standard could deter private enforcement actions to minimize ineffective and inconsistent enforcement through costly litigation.

## Issue

In March 2016, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry approved S. 2609 which would require the U.S. Agriculture Secretary to establish a national voluntary labeling standard for bioengineered foods. Shortly after committee approval, the Senate brought S. 2609 to the floor for debate, but the bill failed to get the 60 votes necessary to advance.

Similar legislation introduced by Representative Mike Pompeo (R-Kansas), H.R. 1599, overwhelmingly passed the House in June 2015.

Two bills requiring mandatory labeling of GMO foods have also been introduced in the Senate, S. 2621, by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) and S. 511 by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-California). A companion measure to Senator Boxer's bill has been introduced in the House, H.R. 913, by Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon).

NPA will review and support any pending or new legislation that is consistent with the four guiding principles outlined below.

### About the Natural Products Association

*Founded in 1936, the Natural Products Association (NPA) is the nation's largest and oldest nonprofit organization dedicated to the natural products industry. NPA represents over 1,400 members accounting for more than 10,000 retail, manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution locations of natural products, including foods, dietary supplements, and health/beauty aids. The association supports a strong grassroots network of members and consumers who are passionate about products that contribute to healthier lifestyles.*

*Headquartered in Washington, DC, NPA has been the leading industry watchdog for 80 years, acting as an advocate on regulatory and legislative issues affecting natural products.*

## **NPA Position**

NPA continues to believe that consumers have a right to know if their food contains GMOs. NPA supports a thorough review of FDA's policy regarding the bio-equivalency of GMO foods in light of current scientific studies to ensure that a uniform Federal standard for GMO labeling reflects the consensus of independent scientific data regarding the quality, safety, and broader impact of GMO foods.

NPA urges Congress to establish a uniform and voluntary Federal standard for GMO food labeling. This uniform standard would provide natural products consumers with information they can use to make informed choices about GMO foods.

More specifically, NPA has adopted the below principles as it relates to GMO labeling:

- Encouraging and supporting voluntary labeling of non-GMO foods;
- Supporting a federal law promoting a uniform federal standard to avoid separate standards for GMO labeling at the state level;
- Opposing a private enforcement provision, which encourages abuse litigation, to impose compliance; and
- Supporting the FDA consistently reviewing the concept of bio-equivalency of genetically modified ingredients in light of the most recent scientific studies.

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