



Important Talking Points on H.112

The Vermont Genetically Engineered Food Labeling Act

We all have the right to know what is in the food we eat and feed our children. Without common sense labeling requirements we cannot tell if our food contains substances of concern to us, including ingredients that have been genetically engineered. Below are some important talking points to touch on when you speak with your legislators.

We deserve to make informed choices for ourselves and our families when we purchase food, including knowing when our food contains genetically modified organisms (GMOs). 64 other countries have already passed simple labeling laws that give their citizens the option to choose the food they need and want. Vermont has always been a leader in protecting its citizens' rights. Labeling GMOs in food sold in Vermont is just common sense — that's why H.112 is endorsed by nearly 200 Vermont businesses, food producers, and farms and over 30,000 citizens. Vermont needs to lead the way on this issue - don't let other states decide when or whether Vermonters have the right to know what's in our food.

Basic Facts about GMOs

What is genetically engineered (GE) food?- Genetically engineered foods (often called genetically modified organisms or GMOs) are produced by means of laboratory techniques that insert genetic material (DNA) from diverse species of plants, animals, viruses, and/or bacteria, into the DNA of other plants or animals creating new organisms that could not occur in nature.

What foods contain genetically engineered ingredients?- Genetically engineered ingredients are found in approximately 70-80% of all processed foods in the United States. The major genetically engineered crops in this country are corn, cotton, soy, sugar beets and canola which are found in the majority of processed foods.

Why Should Vermont Label Genetically Engineered Foods?

GE foods are not adequately regulated: The FDA has determined that they do not believe there is a “material” difference between conventional foods and GE foods. Before letting GE foods onto the market the FDA does not test these foods for their safety, but accepts safety tests done by the corporations producing these foods. However, the FDA does not currently require corporations to do these safety tests in the first place.¹

Studies show that there are reasons to be concerned about eating GE foods: There is no scientific consensus on the safety of GMO foods.² Contrary to industry-funded research, a growing body of international research has documented potential risks to human health. GMO pesticides have been found in the blood and urine of animals and humans.^{2, 4,5} Controlled feeding studies have documented health effects of GMO diets on the immune system, gastrointestinal tract, liver and other organ systems in mice, rats and pigs.^{2,3} To date, further investigation of these and other research findings by independent scientists have not been funded and carried out.^{2,3} These studies clearly demonstrate that safety testing and regulation of GMO foods by the FDA and the EPA are inadequate and need to be strengthened.⁶

GE crops have led to increased pesticide use: A study based on USDA data found that from 1996-2008 there was a 318.4 million pound increase in pesticide use in the United States. When averaged out, this equals an extra quarter pound of pesticide for every acre of GE crops planted over the first 13 years of commercial use.⁷

LABEL GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS
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Why Should Vermont Label Genetically Engineered Foods?

Labeling will prevent consumer confusion and deception: Many consumers do not know what foods are genetically engineered or were produced with genetic engineering. This bill would also stop the deceptive practice of advertising GE food as “natural” or “all natural.”

Without labeling it is difficult to track the health effects of GE foods: Labeling would give the state the ability to track what effects these foods might be having on the health of Vermonters, and to better understand the possible threats that these foods pose.

Our Lawmakers Need to Act Now!

H.112 would allow Vermonters to make informed choices about what they eat- Proposed legislation would require the labeling of foods produced with genetic engineering sold in the state of Vermont. The bill would also prohibit genetically engineered food from being advertised as “natural,” “naturally made,” “naturally grown,” “all natural,” or any other similar words that would tend to mislead the consumer. This bill gives Vermonters essential information about the food they are eating and feeding their families.

There is broad support for GE food labeling- Over 30,000 Vermonters have signed postcards asking their senators to label GE foods, and polls have shown that over 90% of Americans and Vermonters want to see genetically engineered foods labeled.^{8,9} Genetically engineered foods are labeled in over 64 countries worldwide including the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and China.

Vermont should not wait for other states to act before labeling GE food- Vermont has the opportunity to become the first state to see labels on GE foods and we should not let other states decide if Vermonters have the right to know what they are eating and feeding their families.

1 - US Food and Drug Administration, *Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties*, 57 Fed. Reg. 22,984 (May 29, 1992).

2 - No scientific consensus on GMO safety: European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER) 21 October, 2013.

3 - A literature review on the safety assessment of genetically modified plants. Jose Domingo and J. Bordonaba. *Environment International*. 37(2011): 734-742.

4 - Maternal and fetal exposure to pesticides associated to genetically modified foods in Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada. *Reprod Toxicol*. 31 May, 2011.

5 - Friends of The Earth Europe. <http://www.foeeurope.org/weed-killer-glyphosate-found-human-urine-across-Europe-130613>.

6 - William Freese and David Schubert. Safety Testing and Regulation of Genetically Engineered Foods. *Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Reviews*. Vol. 21, November 2004.

7 - Benbrook CM. Impacts of genetically engineered crops on pesticide use in the United States: The first thirteen years. The Organic Center. November 2009.

8 - Center for Food Safety, Polls on GMO Labeling, <http://gfoodlabels.org/gmo-labeling/polls-on-gmo-labeling/>.

9 - 2002 Vermonter Poll, “Vermonters Report Overwhelming Support for Labeling of GMO Food Products”. UVM Center for Rural Studies, Burlington, VT. March 6, 2002. <http://www.uvm.edu/crs/?Page=reports/report.html&SM=reports/reportssubmenu.html>

This information is provided by the VT Right To Know GMOs Coalition www.vtrighttoknow.org

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