

GMO Labeling Comments

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) has gone on record at the New Jersey State Assembly Agriculture Committee hearing on GMO labeling as promoting clear, on-package labels to inform the public of the presence of genetically engineered foods. Since that time, the U.S. Congress has required the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop a label that can be used nationally. The proposed label rules fail to inform the public in an honest and straightforward manner.

The public has come to understand the terminology of “GMO”, so to change the designation to “BE” for “bioengineered” would be unintelligible to most people. We strongly oppose changing the accepted terminology of “GMO”. A neutral icon should be used to indicate the presence of a genetically engineered food product. The proposed rule is highly deceptive by using a smiley- faced sun, in the colors yellow and green (a color traditionally used to mean natural or sustainable).

The rule proposes to allow a QR code on packages that can be read with a smartphone. It has been estimated that one third of the population does not have a smartphone, so this would be very discriminatory. Furthermore, it seems very unlikely that a shopper would take the time to decipher QR codes on multiple items, even if Wi-Fi were accessible. The information should be clearly stated on the package so that every consumer is able to make an informed choice concerning the food that he/she eats.

Any ingredient, regardless of how processed it is, that is derived from a genetically engineered product should trigger the requirement of a GMO label. The definition of genetically engineered has to include any methodology to change a food that is not accomplished through traditional plant breeding practices.

The public has a right to know what is in the food we eat, and food labeling has come a long way over the years to help consumers make wise choices. The proposed GMO labeling rule is a step backward, that tries to deceive rather than educate, and should not be implemented. We support honest labeling on food packages that is readily understood, both linguistically and graphically. Therefore, we oppose the USDA proposed rule.

Submitted by

Stephanie Harris

President of NOFA-NJ