



POLICY & ACTION FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

June 11, 2015

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, urges you to oppose H.R. 1599, a bill introduced by Rep. Pompeo regarding the labeling of genetically engineered (GE) food. The bill would prohibit federal, state, or local requirements for mandatory labeling of GE food and codify the existing, flawed Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voluntary labeling policy.

Consumers Union supports mandatory labeling of GE food. Numerous polls, including our own, show that more than 90% of consumers want GE food to be labeled accordingly. There are various precedents for labeling, including FDA requirements for labeling of food if it is homogenized, frozen, or made from concentrate. There are also laws requiring GE food labeling in some 64 countries, including most of our major trading partners. Yet the prevailing policy at the federal level in the United States is that any labeling of GE food must be the voluntary choice of the food producer. FDA adopted this policy 15 years ago, and today there is not a single food product on the market that carries a label indicating it contains GE ingredients.

Consumers Union commissioned an analysis last year by an independent economic research firm on the cost of labeling GE food. Through a review of published studies, the firm, ECONorthwest, found that the median cost of requiring GE food labeling is \$2.30 per person annually – less than a penny a day for each consumer. This figure takes into account one-time implementation expenses and assumes that most of the labeling cost will be passed on to consumers, so the actual cost per person could be even lower.

Moreover, there is new urgency for requiring GE food labeling. In March, the World Health Organization's cancer agency convened a working group of 17 experts, including seven Americans, which declared that the weed killer glyphosate was "probably carcinogenic to humans." Virtually all GE food crops have been engineered to withstand glyphosate, and as acreage of GE crops has expanded, glyphosate use has increased tenfold. GE labeling could therefore alert consumers that they are supporting the use of this potentially harmful herbicide.

Responding to the clear requests of citizens for information on whether the food they buy contains GE ingredients, dozens of states have recently considered legislation to require GE food labeling. Connecticut and Maine's governments enacted mandatory GE labeling laws that would go into effect if other nearby states follow suit. Vermont enacted a mandatory labeling law that

will become effective in July 2016 regardless of other states' actions. While this law has been challenged in court, a federal judge issued a preliminary ruling on April 27, 2015, indicating that virtually all the law's GE labeling provisions are constitutional and that the state is not preempted under FDA-administered statutes. We support these laws, and the ability of consumers to know what is in the food they buy, eat, and serve their families.

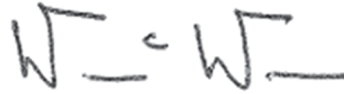
We therefore urge you to reject the proposals contained in H.R. 1599. Instead, we encourage you to support legislation to require mandatory labeling of genetically engineered food, such as H.R. 913, authored in the House by Rep. DeFazio.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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