



Local and Organic Since 1982

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee.

I'm Bill Duesing, the Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut. CTNOFA. I represent over 700 members, including hundreds of farmers, gardeners and land care professionals who avoid using genetically modified organisms in their growing.

I'm here to testify in favor of Raised Bill, 5117, AN ACT CONCERNING GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS.

I thank you for bringing this issue to the public. CTNOFA and its members wholeheartedly support the labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods (also known as genetically modified or transgenic foods). We support Section 3 to provide best practices for Connecticut farmers who do grow transgenic crops. (From discussions with respected dairy farmers who know little about the issues relating to the transgenic corn they are growing on a large scale, I know that education is needed.)

CTNOFA also supports Section 5 that creates a listing of those agricultural commodities that are genetically engineered. I think it would be good to know what commodities are being grown in Connecticut. Currently, I believe it is mostly or all field corn grown to feed cows. However soon there will be genetically-engineered sweet corn and crookneck squash. I think folks who want local and sustainable produce at the farmers markets are not looking for genetically engineered produce. The list of genetically engineered crops continues to grow past the current big four corn, soy, canola and cotton.

We have a right to know what is in our food.

Food is our most important connection with the Earth, after air and water, and our most important, and only essential, energy source. What we eat has enormous effects on our health and our disease.

Humans have lived on this planet for at least 100,000 years. Only very, very recently (in the context of a thousand centuries) have humans eaten other than the plants and animals that nature provides or that farmers and gardeners have bred by natural means.

Only within the last 60 of those 100,000 years have humans eaten foods that contain artificial colors, preservatives, sweeteners or other artificial ingredients.

Fortunately, those products must be listed on the food label so those who choose to avoid them can. They demonstrate a right to know what is in our food.

It is required that a water bottle tell us how much fat, protein and carbohydrate is in that water, but currently we don't know if the ingredients in our food are genetically engineered.

For just the last 15 of those 100,000 years have we been eating the products of transgenic breeding. There are two main kinds of products currently in the food system, aside from the recombinant bovine growth hormone that is used on some dairy cows.

1. The first kind is food crops bred to resist applications of a specific herbicide, largely Roundup. This includes corn, soy, cotton and canola, all used for food. Seeds of the genetically engineered plants function as sales tools for that herbicide. Increasing use of a single herbicide has led to the emergence of super weeds that are very difficult to control. That emergence is exactly what is to be expected from overuse of one poison. The genetic engineers see superweeds resistant to one herbicide as an excuse to breed resistance to other, more toxic herbicides into these plants.
2. The second major category of genetic modification involves inserting a genes for *Bacillus thuringiensis* (or Bt) toxin into corn. This "engineering" causes Bt toxin to be in every cell of every corn plant. The genetic modifiers' claim that this toxin would not pass into human bodies has been shown false by the widespread presence of Bt toxin in humans, even in human fetuses. This situation is made more worrisome by the recent research in Europe that stated:

“In conclusion, these experiments show that the risks of Bt toxins and of Roundup have been underestimated.”

And yet this vast change in what the industrial food system feeds us is not labeled.

The few giant corporations who create and sell genetically modified seeds speak out of both sides of their mouths. To the US patent office, they say this seed is NOVEL, something so new and different that it deserves a patent. Then to the Food and Drug Administration, they say this is just like all other seeds, so there is no need to have any labels. (As an aside, it doesn't hurt that some important folks at FDA have worked for the GMO corporations.)

We should have a right to know what is in our food.

The corporations which want us to blindly accept GMOs in our food are the exact same corporations that thought we should accept lead in gasoline, and eventually everywhere, chlorofluorocarbons in our atmosphere, Agent Orange on our soldiers and PCBs nearly everywhere, including Connecticut's beautiful Housatonic and Quinnipiac Rivers and the fish in them.

Those dangerous products were used and spread their pollution for years until accumulated scientific knowledge showed the dangers of those novel substances.

If genetically engineered food is really so good, farmers and food sellers should be proud to label it as such. Unlabeled, it feels like something is being hidden from us.



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The truth seems to be that while a market success, GMOs are a failure at what they are claimed to do; use fewer herbicides, produce greater yield, make healthier food.

In sections 4 and 6 about preferences for products that are labeled. Is that preference the same whether the label says "contains NO genetically engineered ingredients" or says "Yes this product does contain genetically engineered ingredients."

I encourage you to honor the overwhelming majority of citizens in this country who want to see food containing these NOVEL genes labeled as such.

Thank you.
Bill Duesing

Best regards,
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