



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Testimony presented to the Public Health Committee of
The Connecticut General Assembly
By the Connecticut Department of Agriculture

H. B. 6519 – AN ACT CONCERNING GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD

Chairs Gerrantana and Johnson, Vice Chairs Slossberg and Miller, Ranking Members Welch and Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has some concern related to the practicability of the provisions contained in H.B. 6519 - An Act Concerning Genetically Engineered Food.

Enacting labeling requirements on Connecticut producers when no other states require them will place Connecticut farmers at a competitive disadvantage. The Department believes that a national policy is necessary to keep the playing field level for Connecticut farm families. Uncertainty about whether a crop has become contaminated by open field pollination will require farmers to label all Connecticut crops with the label "Produced with Genetic Engineering" as the proposed bill requires "...food, seed or seed stock offered or intended for retail sale in this state that is, or may have been, entirely or partially genetically engineered..." to be labeled, thereby making the designation near meaningless.

Genetically engineered crops have been researched and designed with a whole host of benefits in mind, including : reducing the need for pesticides, reducing soil erosion, increasing production, driving down food production costs and making food more available and affordable.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's longstanding scientific judgment is that there is no significant difference between foods produced using bioengineering, as a class, and their conventional counterparts. The FDA's scientific evaluation of genetically engineered foods continues to show that these foods are as safe as their conventional counterparts. There are those in Connecticut who argue that many consumers remain unconvinced. There are many stakeholders who maintain that such legislation would be detrimental to Connecticut's economy by unnecessarily raising costs for farmers, retailers and consumers without a commensurate public benefit. They raise the vision of the logistical nightmare of shipping to multiple states with differing standards.

It would seem logical that one national standard be implemented concerning genetically engineered foods so as to eliminate the costly establishment of what could become a plethora of dissimilar state government edicts.

Connecticut has long been in the national lead when it comes to forward leaning health related issues and we will continue to do so.