



Local and Organic Since 1982

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee.

I'm Bill Duesing, the Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut. CT NOFA. I represent our over 800 members, including hundreds of farmers, gardeners, chefs, scientists, educators and land care professionals who avoid using genetically modified organisms in their growing. I'm also a farmer and a member of the Farm Bureau.

I'm here to testify in favor of Raised Bill, 6519, AN ACT CONCERNING THE LABELING OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD.

Thank you for bringing this issue to us today. CT NOFA and its members wholeheartedly support the labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods (also known as genetically modified or transgenic foods). It has been part of our vision for Connecticut for over six years.

We are glad to be a part of the vibrant grassroots coalition of organizations, farms, restaurants and individuals who support this legislation.

Each of us consumes our body weight in GMOs each year, unless we eat only organic or GMO free food. GMOs are a very new thing in the human diet.

The genetically engineered crops grown these days do not "Feed the World," do not reduce pesticide use, do not tolerate drought, do not increase yield and do not increase nutrition, despite the constantly repeated propaganda from two decades ago that they would do these good things.

What GMOs do today is increase pesticide use, decrease yield, provide questionable ingredients for foods and beverages that we mostly shouldn't consume, at least if we want to maintain our health. They also trap farmers and researchers in tight contracts with lots of legal enforcement.

None of that does any good for public health. There is increasing evidence of harm from GMOs.

GMO Labeling will be increasingly important going forward for several reasons.

1. The number of different food plants that are genetically engineered is set to explode. GMOs are likely to increase from the handful of crops that provide the ingredients for processed foods now, to fruits vegetables and other grains. Apples that don't turn brown and sweet corn, squash, tomatoes, lettuce and more created to increase the sales of an herbicide designed to kill all green plants, except GMOs.
2. As the current herbicide technology fails, the industry is creating GMOs that resist more toxic herbicides, creating crops designed to be doused with a cocktail of dangerous herbicides. It is a

toxic spiral that is not good for the environment or public health.

I also bring information from the New England Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union. The National Organization met in Springfield, Massachusetts earlier this month, the first time ever in New England.

Both the regional and the national organizations support the labeling of GMOs, both seeds and food. I've attached relevant excerpts from their policy books.

I encourage you to send Raised Bill, 6519, on its way to passage with a strong majority of this committee. This is an important measure for the long-term health of the people of Connecticut, and to begin to take control of an industrial food system that is literally making us sick, and fat and diabetic.

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

I've also attached several reports about GMOs and their effects for consumers and farmers.

Thank you.
Bill Duesing
Executive Director
CT NOFA
Cultivating an Organic Connecticut
bduesing@mac.com
203 888-5146
203 888-9280, fax
www.ctnofa.org
www.organiclandcare.net

~ NEFU priorities:

- 1. Mandatory labeling of all GMO seed in order to allow producers freedom of choice according to their needs and priorities, and mandatory labeling of all food that contains genetically altered ingredients so as to allow consumers freedom of choice in what they consume and the agricultural systems they support;**

National Farmers Union Policy Book says:

“Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have created a series of ethical, environmental, food safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact everyone in the food chain. Consumer and producer concerns need to be addressed. This includes required consumer labeling for foods made from or containing GMOs.”



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New England Farmers Union Policy Book

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SEED TECHNOLOGY AND GENETICS

Since its introduction in 1996, the use of genetically modified seeds to achieve herbicide tolerance and insect resistance has grown exponentially. A full 88% of the U.S. corn crop, 93% of the U.S. soybean crop and 94% of cotton in the 2012 crop year were grown from genetically engineered seed. The U.S. leads the world in the use of GMO seed technology with 395 million acres planted to GMO corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, sugar beets, alfalfa and squash in 2011.

The use of this technology is widespread. Its use is controversial. GMOs have created ethical, environmental, food safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact everyone in the food chain. Consumer and producer concerns need to be addressed. NEFU acknowledges concerns that biotechnology is being used as a trade barrier. NEFU respects all nations' sovereignty and food policies and thus urges open dialogue, cooperation and understanding in trade negotiations relating to biotechnology.

NEFU priorities:

1. Mandatory labeling of all GMO seed in order to allow producers freedom of choice according to their needs and priorities, and mandatory labeling of all food that contains genetically altered ingredients so as to allow consumers freedom of choice in what they consume and the agricultural systems they support;
2. We support the development of new GMO traits when issues of cross-pollination, liability, commodity and seed stock segregation and market acceptance are objectively addressed and fairly resolved for the protection of all producers and consumers. While biotech traits are under patent, the patent holder should be prepared to indemnify its trait users against financial burdens caused by claims. Research conducted in an environmentally secure indoor facility should be exempt from the above requirements. Research conducted in open fields production should be subject to mandatory public disclosure of persons or entities initiating the research, location of the sites, specific species and traits involved and the characteristics of the intended resultant genetically modified plant to be created. U.S. government agencies, particularly the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should continue to serve their respective roles in providing unbiased, scientifically based evaluations concerning the human and animal safety and wholesomeness, as well as the environmental impacts of biotechnology-enhanced commodities.

NEFU supports:

1. Legislation to exempt farmers from paying royalties on patented farm animals and technical fees on seeds which have been genetically modified;
2. Legislation to prohibit the use of tax dollars in developing terminator technology, e.g., a gene to insure that seed will not reproduce;
3. The right of farmers to save and plant seed derived from proprietary organisms on their own land;
4. New products involving GMOs be certified as safe by the FDA in testing done independently of the patent holder, before being allowed on the market. Such testing is to be done at the expense of the specific patent holders seeking to market such products;
5. Congressional action to regulate the biotech industry's technology agreements. Farmers should not have to sign away their fundamental rights, including, but not limited to a jury of their peers in court, in exchange for the privilege of growing biotech crops. Grievances should be settled in the home state of the farmer, not the state of the biotech corporation;
6. Any damages caused to farmers through lower prices, lost markets or contamination shall be fully reimbursed to farmers, including legal fees, by the company producing the genetically modified product;
7. All data used in the analysis of the health and environmental effects of GMOs should be public record, and that criminal penalties be established for the willful withholding or altering of such data;
8. Prohibiting government regulatory agencies from licensing genetically modified products that are not acceptable for both human consumption and animal feed;
9. Until USDA and FDA improve oversight and regulation of pharma crops, NEFU cannot endorse or support pharma farming based on economic, environmental, food safety and liability risks to producers and consumers;
10. Requiring government regulatory agencies and input suppliers to ensure that farmers are informed of all potential market risks and segregation requirements associated with planting any licensed genetically modified crop;
11. Government regulatory agencies shall consider domestic and foreign consumer acceptance of the product when licensing;
12. Development of a paper verification system and a storage and marketing plan to aid farmers with non-GMO grains;
13. Identity-preserved systems and insist they receive protection from cross contamination;
14. The position that GMO contamination of organic seed constitutes irreparable harm to the organic seed industry and undermines the integrity of organic seed. Any detectable level is unacceptable;
15. GMO seeds and crops be adequately labeled and stored, so that they do not interfere with the export or import of crops and commodities into countries that have concerns about them.
16. Legislation to prohibit the patenting of heritage seed, animal and biological genetics and individual plant traits;
17. Legislation to prohibit the development and selling of seed that is sterile;
18. Legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for damages caused by genetic trespass including safety, health, economic and environmental effects. Farmers are not to be held liable for food safety, human health or



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environmental problems, including cross-pollination, related to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed.

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101. Genetically Modified Organisms and Biotechnology (also see 29 Article I. D. Labeling of Commodities and Commodity Products) Page 58

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have created a series of ethical, 31 environmental, food safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact 32 everyone in the food chain. Consumer and producer concerns need to be addressed. This includes required consumer labeling for foods made from or containing GMOs.

We acknowledge concerns that biotechnology is being used as a trade barrier. We respect all nations' sovereignty and food policies and thus urge open dialogue, cooperation and understanding in trade negotiations relating to biotechnology.

We support:

- a) The development of new GMO traits when issues of cross-pollination, liability, commodity and seed stock segregation and market acceptance are objectively addressed and fairly resolved for the protection of all producers and consumers. While biotech traits are under patent, the patent holder 10 should be prepared to indemnify its trait users against financial burdens caused by claims;
- b) Research conducted in an environmentally secure facility being 13 exempt from the above requirements. Research conducted in open fields production should be subject to mandatory public disclosure of: persons or entities initiating the research, location of test sites, specific species and traits involved and the characteristics of the intended resultant genetically modified plant to be created;
- c) Legislation to prohibit the patenting of heritage seed and animal and biological genetics;
- d) Legislation to prohibit the development of terminator technology in any form;
- e) The right of farmers to plant seed derived from proprietary organisms on their own land;
- f) New products involving GMOs be certified as safe by the FDA in testing done independently of the patent holder, before being allowed on the market. Such testing is to be done at the expense of the specific patent holders seeking to market such products;
- g) Legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for damages caused by genetic trespass including safety, health, economic and environmental effects. Farmers are not to be held liable for food safety, human health or environmental

problems, including cross-pollination, related to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed;

h) Congressional action to regulate the biotech industry's technology agreements. Farmers should not have to sign away their fundamental rights, including but not limited to a jury of their peers in court, in exchange for the privilege of growing biotech crops. Grievances should be settled in the home state of the farmer, not the state of the biotech corporation;

i) Any damages caused to farmers through lower prices, lost markets or contamination shall be fully reimbursed to farmers, including legal fees, by the company producing the genetically modified product;

j) All data used in the analysis of the health and environmental effects of GMOs be public record, and that criminal penalties be established for the willful withholding or altering of such data;

k) Prohibiting government regulatory agencies from licensing genetically modified products that are not acceptable for both human consumption and animal feed;

l) Until USDA and FDA improve oversight and regulation of pharma crops, NFU cannot endorse or support pharma farming based on economic, environmental, food safety and liability risks to producers and consumers;

m) Requiring government regulatory agencies and input suppliers to ensure that farmers are informed of all potential market risks and segregation requirements associated with planting any licensed genetically modified crop;

n) Requiring USDA to further investigate and research the effects of GMO feeds on livestock;

o) Government regulatory agencies shall consider domestic and foreign consumer acceptance of the product when licensing;

p) Requiring all GMO seed to be clearly labeled with the following information:

1. Markets (foreign or domestic) where the product is not accepted, and
2. All planting restrictions;

q) Development of a verification system and a storage, transportation and marketing plan to aid farmers with non-GMO grains;

r) Identity-preserved systems and insist they receive protection from cross-contamination; and

s) The development and implementation of patent rules, legislation (i.e. the Hatch-Waxman Act for pharmaceuticals) or regulations, which promote and maintain free market competition in regard to generic production.

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2. Labeling of Food Products

Thorough and accurate food labels are an important tool that helps consumers make informed decisions and allows producers to differentiate their products. We support conspicuous, mandatory labeling for food products throughout the processing chain to include all ingredients, additives and processes such as:

- a) Artificial growth hormones;
- b) Products derived from cloned animals;
- c) The identity of the parent company;



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- d) Carbon monoxide injected in meat and seafood or packaging for appearance or shelf-life purposes;
- e) Genetically altered or engineered food products.
- f) Point of origin and producer-determined standards for geographic indicators, including percentage coming from that origin;
- g) Date of kill, for meat and seafood;
- h) Whether the meat was frozen;
- i) The date/dates the meat was subsequently refrozen;
- j) Irradiated products, and we call for further research on its long-term effects on human health;
- k) Maintaining and protecting the integrity of organic labeling; and
- l) Labeling standards encouraging the sale of organic products while not limiting opportunities to market other natural or sustainably produced food products.

We oppose:

- a) Labeling poultry chilled below degrees Fahrenheit as fresh; and
- b) USDA regulation that allows the addition of up to eight percent water-weight to poultry products without mandating that these products are so labeled.

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut

A growing community of organic farmers, gardeners, land care professionals and consumers

Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491-0164 • 203-888-5146 • www.ctnofa.org