

*edible*NUTMEG

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GMOs are a contentious subject. Some scientific reports cheer them as laudable and back GMOs as the tool with which to cure world hunger. Other reports are less inspiring and warn of the possible health risks and unprecedented nature of modifying our food systems in this way. Certainly, if nothing else, the relatively short-term presence of GMOs in our food system does not lend itself to accurate scientific study; how can we be sure that a child who ingests large quantities of GMO food will not be adversely affected as an adult or senior? Frankly, there is no way to know; GMOs are too new to our food system to have yet seen the long-term ramifications, whether in study or the consumer base.

But I contend that the matter before the legislation is not a scientific debate, it is an ethical one. What you are debating today is, for all intents, an argument on the RIGHT TO CHOOSE. Ask yourself, do consumers have the right to choose what sort of food they purchase, prepare, and eat? If the answer to that is, “yes,” then your course must be unequivocal. No consumer can choose between genetically modified food or unmodified food, if they have no basis for making that decision. The consumers’ ability to choose is predicated on knowledge of what is in their food, and a lack of GMO labeling denies them that.

This right to choose has long been supported in American capitalism and particularly in the food industry. Not only have food producers been forced to list the ingredients in any food product on the packaging, but they have additionally been forced to provide nutrient information about fats, proteins, vitamins, etc. All of this exists for one reason and one reason alone: to allow consumers to make informed choices about the food they are buying.

GMO labeling allows consumers to make a choice.

As the editor and publisher of *Edible Nutmeg* – a regional food magazine that covers small and sustainable farming and food production in western Connecticut – I know that my readers are deeply interested in knowing where their food comes from. They are interested in hearing about how their food is grown, what goes into it, and what occurs in the production process on the way to that food reaching their plate. *Edible Nutmeg* readers pick up the magazine, because they want to make informed choices about their food.

I believe the decision on GMO labeling rests on only one question: do consumers have the right to make a choice about what they buy? If yes, labeling GMOs is the only way in which consumers will be able to be informed enough to make that choice. No company or corporation should be able to, for any reason, supersede the right of the consumer to make educated choices, and it is one of the functions of state government to ensure that such rights are not infringed upon.

I am confident that Connecticut’s legislators will keep in mind the best interests of their citizens and vote to begin labeling GMOs immediately. Our state should be one of the first to stand up for consumer choice, not one of the last.

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