



Monday, July 20, 2015

Honorable House Leaders,

My name is Melody Meyer and I am the Vice President of Policy and Industry Relations at United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI). We are America's premier certified organic distributor. UNFI has the largest national distribution of organic and natural products including nutritional supplements, personal care items and organic produce, in the United States. We proudly service 32,000 customers across North America with over 65,000 products and employ over 8000 associates.

We employ constituents in California, Colorado, New Jersey, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Florida, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia, Washington, Connecticut, Indiana, New York, Iowa, Rhode Island, Florida, and Massachusetts.

The organic and natural business is robust and continues to grow by double digits year over year. UNFI's estimate sales will be more than \$8 billion this fiscal year. Our customers want to know what is in their food and how it is produced.

We are working to ensure that our consumers in every state know whether their food is genetically engineered (commonly referred to as GMOs) or contains GMO ingredients. Polls show 93% of Americans support labeling of GE food.

The House is expected to vote this week on H.R. 1599 (also known as the DARK act), legislation that would block states from giving consumers the right to know about GMOs in their food and make it harder for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require GMO labeling.

We urge you to VOTE NO on H.R. 1599, introduced by Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.), because it would:

- Preempt states from requiring GMO food labeling; including labeling laws already passed in Vermont, Maine and Connecticut and pending legislation in 17 other states;
- Make it harder for the FDA to ever require national mandatory labeling;
- Codify the failed voluntary labeling system that has been in place since 2001 and used zero times;
- Block state, county and local regulations designed to protect public health, the environment from the impacts of growing GMO crops;
 - These regulations also protect farmers from economic harms caused by pesticide drift; and
- Allow food companies to continue to make "natural" claims on GMO foods and block state efforts to protect consumers from misleading "natural" claims.

130 companies and organizations, including UNFI have recently signed a letter to President Obama urging him to honor his 2007 pledge to require GMO labeling.

Despite claims by the industry, food prices will not increase due to labeling. Companies frequently change labels to highlight new innovations. The retail price of food is impacted by many factors, not simply the cost of making

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food. Industry studies often assume an unprecedented shift in consumer behavior or product reformulation to include non-GMO ingredients.

Expanding the use of GMO crops has increased herbicide applications between 1996 and 2012 by 527 million pounds. As weeds and pests have become more resistant to GMO herbicides, farmers have been forced to resort to even more toxic weed and bug killers. The EPA and USDA recently approved the toxic herbicide Enlist Duo, a mix of glyphosate and 2,4-D. Corn and soybeans have been engineered to resist this new herbicide mixture. 2,4-D has been linked to Parkinson's disease, non-Hodgkins lymphoma and reproductive problems. USDA approval of Enlist Duo will increase 2,4-D use at least 3-fold and potentially as much as 7-fold. There are nearly 500 elementary schools within 200 feet of corn and soybean fields where 2,4-D could be sprayed. According to Dow AgroSciences, the creator of Enlist Duo, the herbicide could travel 200 feet -- even if applied properly.

We do not need GMO crops to feed the world. US farmers produce only 4% of global staples, including rice, wheat, fruits and vegetables. Yields of conventionally bred corn and soybeans have increased as much as yields of GE corn and soybeans. Reducing food waste and ending food-to-fuel mandates would do much more to increase food supplies than biotechnology. Food insecurity is caused by poverty, not food production. We currently produce twice as much food as needed, according to the UN.

Voluntary labeling just won't work. Food companies have been allowed to make GMO and non-GMO claims since 2001, but consumers are more confused than ever. A new USDA non-GMO program simply duplicates an existing FDA guidance that allows non-GMO claims.

Please vote No on H.R. 1599.

Best Regards,

Melody L. Meyer
Vice President of Policy and Industry Relations UNFI

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