

GMO Labeling Bill Passes Senate – Did Whole Foods Sell Us Out?

On Thursday, July 7th, the senate voted 63-30 to approved a bipartisan compromise bill for a federal labeling of food made with genetically modified organisms. The bill is moving to the House of Representatives next.

Proponents of the bill say the law will be good for consumers, allowing shoppers to know what they're getting, and the bill will provide a national standard for labeling.

There are three labeling options. Companies can label the food product as genetically modified or they can use a symbol that denotes GMOs, an on-pack symbol, the bar code, or the unreadable QR product code. When companies choose to label only through the QR code (and we guess that's what most will do), the customer is expected to scan the barcode with their smartphones or call an 800 number.

Critics are quick to point out that this law will wipe out existing labeling laws like Vermont's current legislation that does require clear and conscious GMO labeling. Also, this bill could exempt certain genetically modified foods from any kind of GMO labeling.

Proponents of labeling insisted that nothing short of text on packages would do. Some, including Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont and erstwhile presidential candidate, also raised concerns over the definition in the bill for determining which foods would require labels, a sign that if the bill becomes law, legal challenges will almost certainly follow." – New York Times

For example, if a biotech product is genetically engineered

with items 'found in nature,' (such as bacteria), then it can be passed as a natural food product. Other GMOs, which cannot yet be detected by current technology, would also pass as whole foods under the new law. This would include foods made with non in vitro recombinant DNA techniques." – *Natural News*

The USDA Secretary would also have the power to determine what concentration of GMO ingredients would fall under the labeling law, so it's not unlikely consumers may ingest GMOs even after verifying that the QR bar Code says no GMO.

Even if the customer has a phone and a QR bar code app, and wants to take the time to scan the product, more often than not, cell phones don't work at all or the internet is extremely slow inside a grocery store. Some grocery stores don't even allow cell phones (This is true for Dekalb Farmer's Market in Decatur Georgia. Be sure to check them out if you haven't).

The law will not go into effect for two years if it does make it all the way to be signed into law. Consumers will have to wait, and no other states will be able to legislate labeling in the meantime.

Is Whole Foods in Cahoots With Monsanto?

Walter Robb, the CEO of Whole Foods backs the new bill, saying:

The alternative is that Vermont goes into effect and then there's a number of other states behind that, it makes it difficult for manufacturers to be able to label and label to that different standard...

And I think the way she's put the bill together, which is to give manufacturers choices, is I think the marketplace and

the customers will take it from here... so obviously, I think she's done a great piece of work... we are already are out there further with our commitment to full transparency by 2018. We're not gonna... we're looking at how these two live with each other, but we're already past that, but I think in this day and age, to come together, to create some sort of a reasonable standard that manufacturers can... and gives the customer a lot more information is a pretty good thing."

Whole Foods backed the bill. As Walter made clear, Whole Foods is looking out for their food manufacturers first and foremost. Whole Foods has helped champion the idea of food transparency, but the company would not get behind previous, more conscious legislation to label GMO foods. This bill's ambiguous text leaves a lot to be interpreted, and it is clear this is a bill written by the food companies in an attempt to appease the public without actually affecting GMO sales.

Conclusion

If the bill passes into law, is it a step in the right direction? Maybe. It depends on how the legislation plays out. The bill, as it is now, leaves so much up for interpretation. The harder the public pushes for transparency, the more likely the bill will get better for consumers along the way, or get replaced by something better. Regardless, the best way to avoid GMOs is to avoid buying processed, manufactured food. Stick to the produce section in grocery stores (whole produce GMOs are very rare), visit your local farmer's markets and get to know the farmers (not the guys who buy food from distributors and pretend to be farmers, get to know the actual farmers). And grow your own food! It'll be interesting to see what happens with labeling whole produce if the bill passes and more foods do get genetically modified.

Related Reading:

- *Understanding and Detoxifying Genetically Modified Foods*
- *Scientists Against GMOs – Hear From Those Who Have Done the Research*
- *Doctors Against GMOs – Hear From Those Who Have Done the Research*
- *Foods That Promote Candida Overgrowth and Lead To Leaky Gut*
- *Candida, Gut Flora, Allergies, and Disease*

Sources:

- *Is Whole Foods Really Partnering with Monsanto? Here are the Facts – Live In the Now*
- *Senate Passes A GMO Labeling Bill That The Food Industry Likes – NPR*
- *U.S. GMO food labeling bill passes Senate – Reuters*