

Support HB 3499 Label Genetically Engineered Foods *Support Consumer Choice and a True Free Market*

GMOs, or “genetically modified organisms,” are produced in laboratories. **Unlike** traditional plant hybridization and animal breeding, which try to develop better varieties by selecting traits from the same species, genetic engineering techniques insert specific genes from any plant, animal or microorganism into the DNA of a different species to create new organizations that could not occur in nature.

GMOs are widespread in our food system. The majority of corn, soybeans, canola, cotton and sugar beets grown in this country are GMO. GMO ingredients are found in over 80% of all processed foods in the U.S. and can be difficult for a consumer to identify. **Thus, labeling is necessary to allow the free market to function properly and allow people to make informed decisions.**

HB 3499 by Representative Carol Alvarado requires foods containing GMOs to be accurately labeled.

Labels are necessary for the free market to work and are **not** costly

- A true free market requires consumers to have truthful information on which to make decisions. Polls have consistently shown that Americans overwhelmingly want labels on GMO foods so that they can make informed choices that align with their personal and family values.ⁱ
- An accurate, factual label is vital to making these choices. **A consumer purchasing salmon expects to bring home salmon, not a GMO salmon species spliced with eel.** Misrepresenting a product is the same as is lying to the consumer.
- Although opponents claim that requiring labeling will be costly, the facts don’t support this claim.
 - Over 64 countries have banned or required labeling of GMOs, including the European Union, Australia, China, New Zealand, and Russia. American food manufacturers sell their products, either GMO-free or with GMO labels, all over the world. They can easily offer US citizens the same choice.
 - It’s easy to change the label. When food producers change recipes or branding, they change the product label. We see this all the time – holiday labels or co-branding, for instance. It’s a cost of doing business.

There is no scientific consensus on the safety of GMOs

- **Genetically engineered foods have not been tested for long-term impacts on human health.**
- Almost all of the research that has been done is controlled by the same companies that sell the seeds because they control access to the patented seeds. Much of the research only looked at weight gain in livestock, not health indicators. In addition, almost all of the research has looked at the effects from eating GMOs for just a few weeks or 90 days. It doesn’t matter how many studies have been done if they don’t look at relevant health indicators over long-term exposure.
- A growing body of international research has documented potential risks to human health. Controlled feeding studies have documented health effects of GMO diets on the immune system, gastrointestinal tract, liver and other organ systems in mice, rats and pigs.ⁱⁱ
- Without labeling, we can’t track the epidemiological affects of GMOs; it is impossible to associate health problems with people who ate GMOs, because we don’t know who ate them.

GMOs provide no benefits for consumers.

- Virtually all commercial GMOs are engineered to withstand direct application of herbicide (which means more herbicides are sprayed directly onto the food crop) and/or to produce an insecticide within the plant itself.
- Despite biotech industry promises, **none** of the GMO traits currently on the market offer increased yield, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or any other consumer or societal benefit.

GMO crops harm the environment and our national food security.

- Over 80% of all GMOs grown worldwide are engineered for herbicide tolerance, causing the use of toxic herbicides like Roundup to skyrocket. GMO-linked pesticides have been found in the blood and urine of animals and humans. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, has been linked to kidney and reproductive difficulties, allergic reactions and blocking mineral nutrients essential to human health.ⁱⁱⁱ
- As weeds become resistant to the overuse of Roundup, new GMOs are being developed to enable the use of even more toxic chemicals.^{iv}
- Due to their patents on the GMO seeds, a handful of large companies now control access to the majority of the seed supply in this country. Farmers cannot legally save their seeds from GMO crops, and non-GMO farmers are placed at risk of patent infringement suits. GMOs thus pose a serious threat to farmer sovereignty and to the national food security of our country

HB 3499 is supported by the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Texas Certified Farmers Market Association, Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Sustainable Food Center, Food Policy Council of San Antonio, Slow Food Austin, Farm and Food Coalition (East Texas Community Food Coalition), Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, and Weston A. Price Foundation

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ⁱ Center for Food Safety, Polls on GMO Labeling, <http://gefoodlabels.org/gmo-labeling/polls-on-gmo-labeling/>.

ⁱⁱ European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), *No scientific consensus on GMO safety*, 21 October 2013. Jose Domingo and J. Bordonaba, *A literature review on the safety assessment of genetically modified plants*, 37 Environment International 734-742 (2011).; Gilles-Eric Seralini et al, Long-term toxicity of a Roundup herbicide and a Roundup-tolerant genetically modified maize, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES EUROPE 26:14(2014); Judy A. Carman et al, *A long-term toxicology study on pigs fed genetically modified (AGAM) soy and GM maize diet*, JOURNAL OF ORGANIC SYSTEMS 8:1, 38-54 (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), *No scientific consensus on GMO safety*, 21 October 2013; Aziz Aris & Samuel Leblanc, Maternal and fetal exposure to pesticides associated to genetically modified foods in Eastern Townships of Quebec, Canada. *Reprod Toxicol*.31 May 2011; Friends of The Earth Europe, Weed killer found in human urine across Europe, <http://www.foeeurope.org/weed-killer-glyphosate-found-human-urine-across-Europe-130613>.

^{iv} Benbrook CM, Impacts of genetically engineered crops on pesticide use in the United States: The first thirteen years, The Organic Center, November 2009.