

Negative aspects of enforcing the labeling of gm foods research paper examples

[Business](#), [Customers](#)



Introduction

With the progress of technology comes the progress of man's over-all way of living. There are new ways of doing things and solving problems. Technology has opened new doors for mankind in all aspects of everyday living. It has created new ways of connecting with people, of documenting personal experiences, and even of creating food. One of the most controversial ways in which modern technology has reinvented the process of food production is through genetically modified crops. The process of modifying the genetic composition of plants and animals has become a contemporary solution to a myriad of food related problems all over the world (Runge and Jackson 58). Some see it as a modern day blessing, while others see it as a horrific act against nature itself.

Current Situation of GM Foods and Labeling

Currently, the United States of America has a voluntary labeling policy when it comes to genetically modified foods (Damery, D'Adamo, Graham, Hoffman and Riedl 30). However, there have been recent movements that aim to change this state of affairs due to their perceived notions regarding GM foods. These notions include GM foods being extremely different from non-GM foods and that they are detrimental to people's health (Damery et al. 28). Even international bodies are not unsusceptible to this controversial debate. An example of this can be found in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), the international organization responsible for developing food standards that would "decrease consumers' perception of risk, promote consumer confidence, and facilitate international trade of food"

(Wong 23).

In May of 2002, they held a meeting for the Codex Committee on Food Labeling and in this meeting, it was proposed that the mandatory labeling of GM foods should be included in the food standards (Wong 24). However, they were unable to arrive at an agreement due to the extreme disparity between opinions among the members. Delegations from Norway and India supported the enforcement of GM food labeling while Argentina, Brazil, and the US strongly opposed it (Wong 24). Until now, the issue is yet to be resolved.

For something as seemingly simple as labeling food, this issue appears to be stirring up a lot of heat and controversy. This is because labeling GM foods is not as petty as it seems. It actually has a lot of implications and would lead to countless consequences involving millions of people all over the world.

Food is something that everybody is involved in. Wherever an individual may be—regardless of gender, age, and nationality—that person needs food.

Eating is a basic need that everyone shares. Now that the world has discovered the technology that enables the genetic modification of foods, this basic need has suddenly become not-so- basic. Moreover, with complications come necessary precautions. To some people, this is what GM food labeling is: a necessary precaution.

The basic objective of labeling GM foods is to provide people with accurate information regarding a food's potential effect on their health (Gruere 17). It also aims to protect consumers from deceptive packaging and advertising that can raise safety concerns (Gruere 17). Lastly, GM food labeling is designed to encourage fair competition among different products in the market (Gruere 20). All of these are obviously positive goals, which only seek

to improve people's lives. However, this paper will prove that GM food labeling is unnecessary and unfavorable and that its supposedly positive goals are founded on false premises.

Debunking Misconceptions on GM Foods

Before anything else, it is important to consider the counter-argument.

People who support GM food labeling do so because they believe that consumers have the right to know the contents of what they are eating; particularly if there is a chance that what they're eating could be detrimental to their health (Food Standards Agency 12). In addition to that, labeling GM foods will not only inform consumers, it will also give them the confidence they need when it comes to purchasing products. Seeing accurate labels on GM foods will come across to the consumers as the producers or manufacturers' way of being responsible and accountable for their own products (Huffman, Shorgen, Rousu and Tegene 490). This is because through labeling, potential problems can easily be pinpointed and traced back to them (Food Standards Agency 12). Knowing that a product's manufacturers are confident enough to be accountable for any future issues reassures consumers that the said product is of high quality.

On the contrary, people who oppose GM food labeling understand that doing so will hinder the good that genetically modified foods are designed to produce. They also understand that the opinions of people who support GM food labeling are fueled by misconceptions and outdated traditional beliefs. The biggest of these misconceptions is that GM foods are dangerous to people's health and to the environment (Damery et al. 30). It has become a

common belief that genetically modified organisms will invariably cause mass damage both to people's well-being and to Mother Nature. However, this belief has already been refuted by countless studies. In a 2008 study, it was proven that the frequency of GMO gene transfers is so low that it "poses negligible risks to human health or the environment" (Wong 21). People also see GM foods as dangerous to humans because some of them contain pest-killing toxins. The misconception here is not that GM foods contain the said toxins because they do; rather, the misconception is that their toxins are hazardous to humans. In reality, though, these toxins have been specifically and carefully engineered to only work on unwanted insects and pests. They have no effect whatsoever on other species, and this includes humans. Researches have even shown that the toxins found in GM foods are "some of the safest and most selective insecticides ever used" (Damery et al. 28). In addition to that, studies revealed that the toxins in GM foods actually help in protecting the environment in that using heavily specific insecticides only kill off unwanted insects and leave beneficial insects unharmed (Carter and Guillaume 70). Surprisingly, this makes GM foods preferable over organic products because the production and maintenance of the latter involve problematic insecticides. Debunking common misconceptions regarding GM foods will allow people to give them a chance. Finally understanding that GM foods are barely different from organic foods discredits people's arguments that GM foods should have labels because they pose a threat to people's health. Since they don't pose any threat then it wouldn't be necessary to label them anymore.

Economic Impact

Not requiring manufacturers and producers to label all their genetically modified products will definitely be a huge financial help for them and their customers. This is because GM food labeling is, in fact, an extremely costly process. This is yet another of its negative aspects. According to qualitative studies done regarding GM food labeling expenses, the entire over-all process would cost a single US State \$320 million annually (Lesser 12). This overwhelming amount of money can be attributed to the intricacies and complexities involved in the process of GM food labeling.

The difficulty in GM food labeling is that it requires extreme thoroughness that is almost impossible to achieve when producing and processing products by the billions (Lesser 13). Producers would need to make sure that all genetically modified products are labeled properly. This is not as simple as it sounds since GM food labels have multiple categories, namely: “contains GM ingredients”, “from animals fed GM feed”, “GM production”, “GM Free”, “all ingredients are non-GM”, “non-GM”, “produced using non-GM ingredients”, and “from animals fed non-GM feed” (Food Standards Agency 15). All these elaborate details definitely require more operations and more human labor, consequently increasing the necessary expenses. In addition to those, GM food labeling also require warehousing costs, supermarket-level costs, and, of course, the actual labeling costs. Food products require at least two different warehouse storages. One is with the manufacturer and the other is with the distributor. If GM food labeling does become mandatory, then the stock-keeping unit will be doubled because manufacturers would want to produce both labeled and unlabelled products

in order to give customers a choice (Golan, Kuchler and Crutchfield 12).

Doubling the stock-keeping unit will also double the storage costs. Annually, the warehouse costs alone will amount to between \$39 and \$45 million (Golan et al. 12).

Conclusion

While labeling GM foods may seem beneficial to consumers, this notion is actually erroneous in many ways. It gives the illusion of providing consumers with a choice between organic and GM products. But in reality, it automatically tips the scales in favor of organic products because of people's misconceptions regarding genetic modification. This would decrease product marketability and hamper the production of GM foods. Crippling GM food production will be a huge blow to the food industry because GM foods actually make up a huge percent of it. Just in the recent year, 93% of all soybean crops planted in the United States were genetically modified one way or another (Gruere 21). 85% of all US corn and 82% of US cotton were also involved in genetic modification (Gruere 22). Lastly, labeling GM foods will cost huge sums of money for production alone. This would lead to increases in the prices of the products, further restricting the buying power of the consumers. Therefore, labeling GM foods does not actually empower consumers but restricts them from making choices founded on accurate facts and from being able to afford good quality GM products.

Works Cited

Carter, Colin A. and Guillaume P. Gruere. "Mandatory Labeling of Genetically Modified Foods: Does It Really Provide Consumer Choice?" *AgBioForum* 6. 1

<https://assignbuster.com/negative-aspects-of-enforcing-the-labeling-of-gm-foods-research-paper-examples/>

(2003): 68-70. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Damery, Phil, Nikki D'Adamo, Mike Graham, Matthew Hoffman, and Jessica Riedl. "The Debate on Labeling Genetically Modified Food." public. iastate.edu. Iowa State University, 2008. Web. 03 Nov. 2014

Food Standards and Agency. "GM Labelling: Exploring Public Responses to the Labelling of GM Food and the Use of GM Labelling." food.gov.uk. Food Standards Agency, 2013. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Golan, Elise, Fred Kuchler, and Stephen R. Crutchfield. "Labeling Genetically Modified Foods: An Economic Appraisal." oregonstate.edu. Oregon State University, 2000. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Gruere, Guillaume P. "Labeling Policies of Genetically Modified Food." pbs.ifpri.info. International Food Policy Research Institute, 2007. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Huffman, Wallace E., Jason F. Shorgen, Matthew Rousu, and Abebayehu Tegene. "Consumer Willingness to Pay for Genetically Modified Food Labels in a Market with Diverse Information: Evidence from Experimental Auctions." Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics 28. 3 (2003): 481-502. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Lesser, William. "Costs of Labeling Genetically Modified Food Products in N. Y. State." dyson.cornell.edu. Cornell University, 2014. Web. 03 Nov. 2014

Runge, Ford and Lee Ann Jackson. "Negative Labeling of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): The Experience of RBST." AgBioForum 3. 1 (2000): 58-62. Web. 03 Nov. 2014

Wong, Diana. "Genetically Modified Food Labelling." legco.gov.hk. The Legislative Council Secretariat, 2003. Web. 03 Nov. 2014