

The rights of americans to have gmo labeling

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Most people have heard of the term ‘ GMO’ at least once in the past few years, but what does it actually mean? The term GMOs, or Genetically Modified Organisms, is referring to the altering of genes in plants or animals that result in an ‘ enhanced’ product that would not normally be found in nature (The Non-GMO Project). In the past, people had no concern about GMOs because, well, they knew nothing about them! Today people see GMOs as a detriment to their health, a damage to the environment, and a violation of American’s rights (The Non-GMO Project).

More and more people are fighting for the right to have GMO labeling because of research, because the U. S. is one of the only countries without GMO labeling (Carter, 2003), and simply because Americans want to know what they are putting in their bodies! Americans believe they have a right to know if their food is GE (Genetically Engineered), and that the government is responsible for giving them that information. The GE tomato became the first GE food on the market in 1992 after it was approved by the FDA (justlabelit.org).

Foods and products just like the tomato kept popping up, such as cotton that was herbicide-tolerant and insect-resistant, and soybeans that could produce more monounsaturated fats. All of these kinds of experiments are still happening to this day! (justlabelit.org). Some people may think that having plants that resist insects and having soybeans that can produce more healthy fats is a good thing, however there is research supporting the unhealthy affects of GMOs. Studies show that over 90% of Americans support mandatory GMO labeling (justlabelit.org).

One of the main reasons for this high percentage is the research concluding that GMOs affect health in a negative way (justlabelit. org). One study that observed the affects of GM potatoes on lab rats found that the new genes from genetic modification in the potatoes resulted in increased mucosal thickness in the lining of the stomach and increased cell growth in parts of the rats' small intestines, which has a harmful affect on digestion (Ewen, Pusztai, 1999). Another study says that the insects being affected by the gene manipulation of plants will have a higher rate of mortality (Crawley, 1999).

Even though this may seem beneficial to farmers since the plants will not be destroyed by the insects, it is harmful to the environment since if there is an increase in the amount of GE crops, then there will be a decrease in the amount of insects which will therefore affect the whole ecological system. Crawley's study also showed that the pollen collected from bees and butterflies could travel to other areas of various distances and affect the natural formation of the plants that form in those new areas (Crawley, 1999).

This is a huge concern for Americans since even if a GE crop is known to grow in one area, in the span of a few years, a whole new set of GE crops can arise in a different area with no one having any intention of those new GE crops forming. This is the exact reason why so many Americans are fighting for the right to have GMO labeling; American citizens have no idea if their food has GMOs or not since GE crops could potentially be all over. Without the testing of crops and the labeling of products, most citizens feel at risk.

Even though the research done was on mammals other than humans and they were short-term studies on health, it is still a good indication of how GM crops affect human health (Crawley, 1999). GM crops take up a lot of U. S. land, and the amount of land used for these crops have grown over the years. The National Agricultural Statistics Service's data table on GE corn varieties from 2000 to 2013 shows that Michigan went from producing 12% of GE corn in 2000 to 90% in 2013. Similar results were also reported for other states in the central U. S.

It is no wonder why American citizens have become more concerned over the years about GM crops; they are becoming more and more prevalent. This diagram shows that the U. S. uses more than twice as much land for GM crops than Brazil, which is the next country to use the most land for GM crops (Clive, 2011). Even though these other nations also grow GM crops, it is not to the same extent as the U. S. , and many of those other nations already require GMO labeling (Carter, Guillaume, 2003).

This is another main reason why Americans are fighting for GMO labeling; 64 nations already require it (justlabelit. org). These 64 other nations make Americans realize the rights that are being withheld from them, and they start to blame the establishment in charge: the federal government. Obviously American citizens want GMO labeling for a variety of different reasons, but what is the government doing about it? The answer is that they are not labeling food for a variety of reasons; reasons that Americans believe are somewhat invalid.

The first is that GMOs do not have much different harms than most other foods Americans buy; both GMOs and common foods have allergens, toxins

and anti-nutrients in small amounts (Anderson et al, 2002). The government also argues that companies are required to test every product with GMOs for health risks before submitting them to the FDA for evaluation; if it is above a certain standard, then it will not be sold to consumers (Anderson et al, 2002). Companies are also against spending the extra money to label their products since policy makers claim that GMO labeling will lead to unnecessary marketing costs (Caswell, 1998, Carter, 2003).

The government believes that if the companies start labeling their products, less people would buy them, and therefore the market would be affected negatively (Carter, 2003). The government argues that “ The long-term environmental impact of the new technology is uncertain, but [we] do not want to hamper the development and competitiveness of national agro-industry or biotechnology (Crawley, 1999). ” This shows that the government mainly does not want to ruin the market, which makes Americans quite unhappy.

Even though the government has good reasons for not wanting to label products with GMOs, Americans argue that they still do not have freedom of choice (The Non-GMO Project). Even if the health risks found in GMOs are also found in other common foods, Americans can check the food labels of common foods to see if they will be harmed by it (Roff, 2009); if there is no GMO labeling, then Americans are completely unaware. Biotechnological experts also believe that the current regimen for companies testing GMOS is not as secure as it could be; they say in order to improve the system, the

FDA should verify the companies summary data and explain to the public how the data evaluation was carried out. This would allow Americans to

develop more trust in the government (Anderson et al, 2002). So in short, American citizens currently have lower trust in the government since they are not allowed GMO labeling due to economic concerns and faults in the testing system. Americans have been using their first amendment right to assemble organizations and protest against not only the government, but also the companies that create the GMOs.

Some of the more popular organizations have been the Non-GMO Project and Just-Label-It. Both are non-for-profit and are against the consumption of GMOs and are fighting for the right of GMO labeling (The Non-GMO Project, justlabelit.org). The Non-GMO Project takes more of a civil disobedience approach since the organization is focused on creating their own food products without GMOs so consumers can avoid products made by companies such as Monsanto (The Non-GMO Project).

The organization says, “ Our strategy is to empower consumers to make change through the marketplace. If people stop buying GMOs, companies will stop using them and farmers will stop growing them (The Non-GMO Project). ” So obviously they use a boycott approach against the large companies that sell GMO products. The Just-Label-It organization however uses more of a direct approach; the organization has options on their website to sign a petition against the FDA and send e-mails to members of congress.

They set new goals regularly for how many people they want to contact the FDA (currently it is at 1. 4 million) (justlabelit.org). 600 plus organizations support Just-Label-It and over 3000 retailers support the Non-GMO project, so one can see that these organizations are growing and may even be

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successful in gaining GMO labeling (justlabelit. org, The Non-GMO Project). Another movement that has been popular recently is the March Against Monsanto (Monsanto is a multi-national company that is the leading producer of genetically engineered foods (Monsanto. com)).

The March Against Monsanto began in May, 2013 in response to the failure of the California Proposition 37 (a ballot measure that would have required GMO labeling) (March Against Monsanto, 2013). Monsanto spent 8. 1 million dollars in order to oppose the proposition; they succeeded (marchagainstm Monsanto. com). The people who participated in the march in May and the one in October, 2013 have used their first amendment right to protest against Monsanto with the goal of shutting them down (March Against Monsanto, 2013).

The government has yet to give in to the protestors, however the March Against Monsanto and other movements such as the Non-GMO Project and Just-Label-It do promote awareness and get the public involved in order to gain GMO labeling. It is obvious that Americans feel it is the government's responsibility to give them GMO labeling and that Americans are becoming more involved in order to gain that right; just this year Americans have started targeting the actual companies that are the main producers of GMOs, which is a big step to reaching their goal.

Whether it is to maintain their health, or to just simply have the freedom of choice as to what goes into their bodies, Americans want GMO labeling. Organizations such as Just-Label-It and the Non-GMO Project have arose in order to not only make the public aware, but also to fight against the government. Whether it is through protests in the streets like the March
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Against Monsanto was, or boycotting GMO products like the Non-GMO Project does, Americans have many different ways of fighting against the government. Maybe soon, Americans will finally gain this right, just as 64 other nations already have.