

GMO UPDATE

CONSUMER CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE RISE

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) dominate certain sectors of US agriculture. The long-term health effects of eating such foods are not known. The nonprofit Non-GMO Project states that GMOs pose risks “to our health, our families, and our planet.”

What’s modified?

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that 94 percent of soy, more than 90 percent of sugar beets and canola, and 88 percent of corn in the US are grown using genetically modified seeds. The Grocery Manufacturers Association has estimated that more than three-quarters of all foods on the market contain GMOs.

In addition to the crops identified by the USDA, the Non-GMO Project describes alfalfa, cotton, Hawaiian papaya, zucchini, and yellow summer squash as “high risk” of being genetically modified. Animal products such as milk, meat, and eggs are also listed because of contamination in feed.

What’s not?

The Non-GMO Project Verified seal certifies that ingredients in a product have been tested. It’s not a complete guarantee that GMO ingredients have not slipped in by accident or cross-contamination, but it does indicate that the companies whose products bear the seal “are serious about keeping GMOs out, and work hard to do so.” The Non-GMO Project is the only organization that offers independent verification of testing and GMO controls for products in the US and Canada. “Buying products that are enrolled and verified in the Project is a great way to support the sustained availability of non-GMO choices in North America,” according to the project’s website.

A push for transparency

Children are likely to be exposed to GMOs through many of their favorite foods. Conventional cereals, snack bars, cookies, cold cuts, and crackers contain large amounts of high-risk food ingredients.

Polls consistently show that more than 90 percent of Americans support labeling genetically engineered products. To sign a petition to the FDA in support of GMO labels, visit justlabelit.org.

SELECTED SOURCES The Non-GMO Project, www.nongmoproject.org n “Sales of Natural and Organic Food Are Booming for Specialty Retailers . . .” by Caroline Scott-Thomas, www.foodnavigator-usa.com, 8/28/12

October is Non-GMO Month, and the campaign to reduce our consumption of genetically modified foods appears to be gaining ground. Sales of products carrying the Non-GMO Project Verified seal saw a big jump this summer, climbing by 21 percent from June through August.