

To MA legislators: Poorly-designed GMO labeling bill will misinform consumers

I understand that you support H3996 because you believe it is a labeling requirement, and my comments below will be based on [the text as I saw it in the MA Legislatures web site](#) as of June 5, 2014. As I read the bill, the product packages in MA will be labeled with the phrase “Produced with Genetic Engineering”. It doesn’t specify which ingredient is GMO.

In the case of the single ingredient in tofu that might be clear what is “produced with genetic engineering”. But let’s examine another label. Let’s pick Cheddar Whole Grain Goldfish® as an example. (This example is obtained on June 5, 2014 from this site. This may change in the future, of course.)

Current ingredient label:

“MADE WITH SMILES AND WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR, UNBLEACHED ENRICHED WHEAT FLOUR (FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE [VITAMIN B1], RIBOFLAVIN [VITAMIN B2], FOLIC ACID), CHEDDAR CHEESE (CULTURED MILK, SALT, ENZYMES, ANNATTO), VEGETABLE OILS (CANOLA, SUNFLOWER AND/OR SOYBEAN), CONTAINS 2 PERCENT OR LESS OF: SALT, AUTOLYZED YEAST, YEAST, LEAVENING (BAKING SODA, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE), PAPRIKA, SPICES, DEHYDRATED ONIONS.”

As I understand it, this package would probably now likely carry the “Produced with Genetic Engineering” label, due to canola or soybean oils or possibly the vitamins. However, because the specific item will not be designated, this may lead consumers to mistakenly conclude that the wheat is GMO. There is no commercial GMO wheat. I do not believe consumers benefit from this misleading label. Further, since oils are refined and have neither DNA or protein that differs from conventional oils, the production by GMO methods offers no useful ingredient information either.

I remain disappointed in the MA legislature for their apparent support for this poorly-designed legislation that is likely to misinform consumers, potentially increase costs, and which may have unintended consequences on manufacturing and retail interests as well. Perhaps there is time to improve it, or better yet seek out scientific input on a better strategy. Personally, I believe [a system like Kosher is the best way to manage this philosophical issue](#). But I know other science folks who could support labels if they were implemented in an evidence-based manner, rather than one founded on passions.

Read the full, original article: [Dear Legislator, About that GMO Labeling bill...](#)