

## Anti-GMO sentiments lean to 'obsessive' in Arizona

His story is typical of those who preach the dangers of eating genetically modified organisms: Four years ago, Jared Keen lived on fast food and a daily jumbo soda. Since moving to a “plant-based diet,” he has shed 140 pounds and says his health and mood have improved greatly. He became an evangelist of vegetables.

And it was while researching healthy eating that Keen read about genetically modified organisms, known as GMOs, and their prevalence in the nation's food supply. He also read about political movements that ask for all GMO food to carry a label. This spring, he filed paperwork to get an initiative on the Arizona ballot. His deadline to collect 172,809 signatures is 5 p.m. Thursday. Late this week, he estimated he had about 80,000 signatures.

“I think it's one of the greatest health disasters inflicted on Americans by an American corporation, ever,” said Keen, who lives in Tucson. The corporation he was referring to is Monsanto, a St. Louis-based company that is among those that created genetically modified crops.

That combination — of those who embrace the idea of “natural” and those who question the protection of public officials — is driving a movement to affix a label to foods containing GMOs, whether or not studies or science give reason to provide what will amount to a warning for consumers.

It's why, in March, Keen found himself collecting petition signatures at Prepper Fest. His table was among those offering information on dehydrated food, water purification and gun safes in anticipation of a disaster or anarchy. The anti-GMO message, with its undertones of corporate greed and government corruption, found a welcome audience at this exhibit hall on the state fairgrounds in Phoenix.

Francine Romesburg, facilitator of the GrassRoots Tea Party Activists of Glendale, stopped by the booth to greet volunteers. GMO opponents spoke to her group a few months back. “Think about it. It's an easy way for the government to kill off people,” Romesburg said. “Our government is trying to kill us through foods, and we're just trying to find out about it and they're trying to keep it from us.”

Peter Ellsworth, director of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's pest management center, said that those against GMOs are as hardened in their decisions as those who deny climate change. Most often, he said, it is people who lean liberal who refuse to accept the scientific consensus on the safety of GMO.

“It tilts to the obsessive,” Ellsworth said. “Be interested in your food, that's good. But there's no bogeymen when it comes to the production of food.”

**Read the full, original article:** [GMO-debate injects emotion into food science](#)