

Just label it: Risk expert says food companies' fears about GMO stigmatization unwarranted

There are a lot of pros and cons about agricultural biotechnology, AKA GMOs. Factual pros and cons about human safety (the vast majority of studies find no harm to humans) and environmental impacts (most hybrids, GMO or otherwise, do cause shifts in the ecosystems in which they grow)...and values-based pros and cons, about commercial monoagriculture and big companies profiting from modern technologies. Those are all conversations society needs to have. But one thing is getting in the way, at least in the U.S. The fight over labeling.

GMO opponents want labels; to give consumers choice, they say, but actually to scare consumers away and kill the whole technology of manipulating genes to create plant and animal varieties with new traits. Companies that make foods resist such labels, fearful that they WILL scare consumers away.

There are many pros and cons to the labeling question alone, but one BIG question, probably the biggest of all, is; would GMO labels scare people away? Is the corporate 'fear of fear' (as Peter Sandman has put it), warranted? More and more evidence suggests it may not be.

1. Agricultural economist Professor Jayson Lusk at Oklahoma State University asked [Might Consumers Interpret GMO Labels as a Warning Label](#) and basically, the answer was no. Lusk and colleague Marco Constanigro of Colorado State showed one group of subjects apples labeled either "Contains GE" or "does not contain GE", and they did not find more concern for people given information about the presence of GMOs than those not given labels.

2. [Research by Phillip Aerni](#) studied conditions in the real world, Switzerland, and had similar results, though researchers presented consumers with different prices and choices (conventional, GMO labeled, and organic). This despite the Swiss vote in 2005 to ban GMO crop cultivation for five years. In other words, what people said at the polls and what they did with their money as consumers, didn't entirely match.

Read the full, original blog: [GMO Food Labeling. Go For It, Food Companies. Your Fear of Fear May Be Excessive.](#)