

## GMO labeling costly for those who don't even care

Mandatory labeling of GM food in the United States will not only make all food more costly but also bamboozle consumers.

Proponents of mandatory labels for genetically modified (GM) food in the United States claim to be motivated by the interests of the consumer. They argue that labeling would help consumers understand what they eat. In reality, though, the campaigns to introduce labeling legislation are designed to scare consumers away from GM products.

The foremost problem is the potentially huge cost. Establishing and enforcing a labeling system for staple crops is not just about printing more detailed labels. GM and non-GM foods would need segregation from planting to plating, necessitating intense audits and constant policing to maintain the apartheid during harvesting, transportation, storage, processing and distribution. This is a much more daunting proposition than the USDA's organic program which handles only ~4 percent of U.S. foods. The cost of personnel and systems for certification/testing and compliance/enforcement was estimated by the state of Washington at \$22.5 million annually, just for governmental supervision for its own territory; Oregon, with half Washington's population, estimated \$11.3 million. Extrapolated nationally, the price for government supervision of labeling could approach a billion dollars.

Consumers, ultimately, pay the price. Some studies estimate a hike in retail food prices as high as 10 percent, not a disaster for those who already buy premium products to 'avoid' GM food at organic or 'non-GMO' supermarkets, but a budget-breaker for the large number of Americans struggling to meet weekly food bills.

Mandatory labeling will do nothing for those who genuinely want to avoid GM foods. It will financially penalize those who don't care.

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