Why state by state GMO labeling laws won't work

Over the past few months, there have been several big stories on the labeling of GMOs. The one factor that stands out more than any other is what each of these entities choose to define as "GMO". From a molecular biology perspective, a transgenic animal or crop is one where a gene from an unrelated species is added to another. But the term "GMO" as used in the current debate doesn't have a clear definition.

For example, is milk derived from a cow that is fed GM-grain a GMO? According to the Non-GMO Project, an organization that certifies ingredients as non-GMO, milk from a cow fed GM-grain cannot be certified as non-GMO. However, Ben & Jerry's, an ice cream company and one of the first large organizations to declare that it was going GMO-free and supports labeling, sources its milk from cows fed GM-grain. Ben & Jerry's website explains their criteria for GMOs by stating "if you eat a corn chip containing GMO corn, it doesn't make you a genetically modified human."

The definition even changes from one state to the next. In Vermont, the labeling bill states that you don't need to label if the amount of GM material makes up less than 0.9 percent of the total weight of processed food, but in California's proposed (and failed) bill the cutoff was set at 0.5 percent. Colorado's proposed (and failed) bill stated that chewing gum was exempt from labeling. In Colorado, Vermont, and California, alcoholic beverages were exempt, but I could find no such exemption in the bill from Connecticut.

Some may argue that it's better that we just start somewhere. Anywhere. They will argue that any form of labeling is better than none. But the immediate consequence of a labeling bill that does not meet everyone's requirements is the fact that the number of labels and verification-criteria will explode.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: The inconvenient truth about GMO labeling