

## 80% of Americans demand mandatory labeling of ASOs—Artificially Selected Organisms

[A new petition to Whitehouse.gov](#) demands mandatory labeling for all “artificially selected organisms” (ASOs). The petition reads:

ASO plants or animals have had their genetic makeup altered to exhibit traits that are not naturally theirs. Artificial selection (or selective breeding) involves the selection of traits that are beneficial to humans, not what helps the organism survive in nature.

And concludes:

80 percent of Americans support mandatory labels on food containing DNA.

[That last bit is true.](#) A survey performed by Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics found that 80.44 percent of Americans supported “mandatory labels on foods containing DNA.” That puts into perspective public support for mandatory labels on genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The petition is obviously satire, and I think it represents the perfect use of satire – putting into sharp relief the illogic of a specific position or claim.

The GMO critics’ position is that radically altering plants through non GM methods is inherently safer than genetic modification. Usually when they refer to genetic modification they are thinking of transgenic modification, taking a gene from an unrelated species that would not ordinarily be able to hybrid with the target plant. There is also cisgenic modification where genes from related species are used.

Either way, let’s explore that claim. [A recent editorial by William Saletan in Slate](#) (required reading for anyone interested in the GMO debate) nailed why the anti-GMO position is untenable:

They portray genetic engineering as chaotic and unpredictable, even when studies indicate that other crop improvement methods, including those favored by the same activists, are more disruptive to plant genomes.

Other methods, like hybrids and mutation farming, quickly cause many changes to the plant genome – more quickly than genetic modification. What takes time with these methods is that the changes are random, and so you have to keep trying until you get the desired trait or traits without undesired ones.

The “natural” argument is ultimately vacuous and inconsistent. This satirical petition shows one aspect of their inconsistency. It further shows (and Saletan argued very effectively) that the movement to demand mandatory labels for GMOs is misguided and ultimately hypocritical.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Artificially Selected Organisms](#)**