

USA Today editorial: GMO labels scare consumers

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Mandatory [GMO] labeling — set to go into effect in Vermont on July 1 unless Congress overrides state laws — has risks and consequences its backers rarely acknowledge. On balance it's a bad idea. A key reason is that it validates the notion that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are dangerous, which is simply not true.

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The facts are reassuring. "The science is quite clear," [says the American Association for the Advancement of Science](#). . . . Americans have been eating GMOs for years — [75% to 80% of foods contain them](#)— with no detectable ill effects.

These days, though, scientific evidence can easily fall victim to scary warnings based on emotion but devoid of fact. . . .

The scare-mongering over GMOs has been just as effective. [A Pew study](#) showed that while 88% of scientists believe GMOs are safe, only 37% of Americans do. . . [T]he idea that GMO foods should be labeled reinforces the idea that there's something wrong with them. . .

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The risk from mandatory labeling is the same as any action that ignores science and plays to unfounded fear. If consumers shun GMOs, the food industry will have to respond by producing less of them. That could have a particularly harsh impact in poorer parts of the world. . .where GMOs can make an enormous difference.

Consumers who want to avoid GMOs already have ways to do that. They can look for voluntary labels that certify products "100% organic" or "GMO free."

When states such as Vermont act on their own, food makers will confront a costly patchwork of conflicting requirements. Better that Congress set a single standard allowing voluntary labeling without lending any credence to unscientific scare theories.

Read full, original post: [GMO labels feed fears: Our view](#)