

GMO labeling: Is it really about consumer choice?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Recently the Senate failed to pass legislation that would effectively mandate the labeling of [genetically engineered food](#). That's a good thing.

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What about consumer choice, though?

There are consumers who genuinely want to know about whether their food has been genetically engineered. That's fair. However, for those individuals, what exactly are they gaining by having genetically engineered food labeled? There are already labels indicating whether food isn't genetically engineered. Why isn't this satisfactory?

The consumer choice argument is flimsy (even unrelated to the lack of scientific support) because it isn't clear what information a consumer doesn't have now to make an informed decision. For example, since some consumers want to buy only food that's [gluten-free](#), should any food product that isn't gluten-free be labeled as non-gluten-free? Of course not, because consumers know that if it doesn't say gluten-free, it probably isn't. Silence does say something to consumers.

There's also the pesky problem regarding the science: There's no scientific justification for labeling.

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Some consumers may want to mandate labeling *despite* the science, but compelling companies to disclose such information without any scientific basis would be inappropriate (and a gross abuse of governmental power) and [very well](#) could violate the [First Amendment](#).

There are many well-meaning people who want genetically engineered food to be labeled. However, for some, it doesn't appear to be about knowing whether food is genetically engineered. It's really about using labels to scare and mislead, because on the surface and without proper context, genetic engineering sounds a bit disconcerting. They support labeling not due to consumer choice, but instead because they don't want there to be genetically engineered food.

Read full, original post: [Mandatory GMO Labeling Isn't About Putting Consumers First](#)