

## Former agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack: Non-GMO, gluten-free labels fan consumer fears

*Editor's note: Tom Vilsack is the former US Secretary of Agriculture and Governor of Iowa, and currently serves as CEO and President of the US Dairy Export Council*

For the food industry, 2017 was the year of the label. Whether 'non-GMO' or 'no high fructose corn syrup', 'no added hormones' or 'gluten-free,' consumers are increasingly demanding more information about what's in their food.

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On its face, it makes sense. If consumers say they want transparency, tell them exactly what is in your product. That is simply supplying a certain demand.

But the marketing strategy in response to this consumer demand has gone beyond articulating what is in a product, to labeling what is NOT in the food. ... So-called "absence claims" labels – those that arbitrarily tell a consumer what isn't in a product, rather than what is – represent an emerging labeling trend that is harmful both to the consumers who purchase the products and the industry that supplies them.

For example, Hunt's put a "non-GMO" label on its canned crushed tomatoes a few years ago – despite the fact that at the time there was no such thing as a GMO tomato on the market. There still isn't today, yet the label remains. Some dairy companies are using the "non-GMO" label on their milk, despite the fact that all milk is naturally GMO-free, regardless of the type of feed given to the cows that produce it.

**Read full, original post:** [Stop the Food Label Fear-Mongering](#)