

Sugar beet farmers worry USDA will require GMO label despite ‘molecularly identical’ product

Colorado farmer Steve Kelly brushes aside a small mound of dry yellow dirt to reveal a sugar beet seed that’s no larger than a peppercorn. It seems insignificant, but the seed is different from what he planted more than 20 years ago.

“The quality of the beet wasn’t as good and yield and everything that way wasn’t as good either,” he said.

Now all but 5 percent of sugar beet seeds in the U.S. are genetically modified, or GMO.

The genetically engineered sugar beet was introduced ten years ago and has allowed farmers to grow more beets on less land, the 2012 U.S. Agricultural Census said. Farmers also report using less water.

Industry experts say GMO has revolutionized sugar beet farming, but an upcoming decision from the U.S. Department of Agriculture has many farmers, Kelly included, wondering whether they’ll have to return to conventional seed.

GMO foods [must](#) be labeled by 2020 under a federal regulation. Beet sugar looks molecularly identical to any other refined sugar, but if the USDA decides it and all the products its used in get a GMO label, sugar cane will get a leg up because it’s a non-GMO crop — hurting sugar beet farmers and possibly raising consumer prices.

Read full, original post: [Sugar Beet Farmers Caught In GMO Debate, Wait For USDA Labeling Decision](#)