

Press Release

# Boxer, Blumenthal, DeFazio Introduce Bill to Require Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods

## 90 Percent of Americans Supporting the Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods To Allow for Informed Decisions About the Foods They Eat

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Thursday, February 12th 2015

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) today joined with Chef Tom Colicchio at a press event in the Capitol to introduce the *Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act*, legislation that would require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to clearly label genetically engineered (GE) foods so that consumers can make informed choices about what they eat.

**“Consumers have a right to know what is in the foods they eat and parents have a right to know what they are feeding their families,”** Senator Boxer said. **“This legislation will direct the Food and Drug Administration to require clear information for food that has been genetically engineered.”**

**“As a consumer and dad, I want to know whether my family is eating food that has been altered artificially in genetics-- and the American public wants and deserves to know as well,”** Senator Blumenthal said. **“This measure is about the right to know-- disclosure of critical information about**

**the most widely consumed products. Consumers demand disclosure and truth-telling about food, and they're right."**

**"We cannot continue to keep Americans in the dark about the food they eat,"** Congressman DeFazio said. **"More than sixty other countries make it easy for consumers to choose. Why should the U.S. be any different? If food manufacturers stand by their product and the technology they use to make it, they should have no problem disclosing that information to consumers."**

**"The public wants more information about the food they are buying and how it's grown,"** said Tom Colicchio, owner of Craft Restaurants and co-founder of Food Policy Action. **"I applaud Sen. Boxer and Rep. DeFazio for their leadership, and urge their colleagues to join them, and stand up for the 93% of Americans who want to know if their food has been genetically modified."**

The FDA currently requires the labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives and processes, including labels for juices made "from concentrate," but the agency has resisted labels for genetically modified foods. In a 1992 policy statement, the FDA allowed GE foods to be marketed without labeling, claiming that these foods were not "materially" different from other foods because the genetic differences could not be recognized by taste, smell or other senses.

Unfortunately, the FDA's antiquated labeling policy

([http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/labeling\\_fact-sheet\\_35682.pdf](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/labeling_fact-sheet_35682.pdf)) has not kept pace with 21<sup>st</sup> century food technologies that allow for a wide array of genetic and molecular changes to food that can't be detected by human senses. Common sense would indicate that GE corn that produces its own insecticide, or is engineered to survive being treated with herbicides, is materially different from traditional corn that does not. Even the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has recognized that these foods are materially different and novel for patent purposes.

According to surveys, more than 90 percent of Americans support

([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/science/strong-support-for-labeling-modified-foods.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/science/strong-support-for-labeling-modified-foods.html?_r=1&))

the labeling of genetically engineered foods. In fact, many consumers are surprised to learn that GE foods are not already labeled. Also, 64 countries around the world already require the labeling of GE foods, including all the member nations of the European Union, Russia, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand.

Millions of Americans have filed comments with the FDA urging the agency to label GE foods, underscoring that today's consumers - who are used to reading labels to see if foods contain MSG, gluten, trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or aspartame - clearly want more information when making decisions for their families.

The legislation would require clear labels for genetically engineered foods intended for human consumption, including whole foods, processed foods, seafood and animal-based foods to provide consumers with material information about their food and prevent consumer confusion. Under the bill, if a food has been genetically engineered, it would be identified as a GE food in the ingredients list. Any product that has been genetically engineered would also not be allowed to identify itself with a “natural” label.

The measure would also resolve concerns about the emerging patchwork of state labeling standards by directing the FDA to implement a federal labeling standard for all GE foods. Three states – Connecticut, Maine and Vermont – currently have mandatory GE labeling laws, and in 2013 and 2014, more than 60 bills and ballot initiatives were introduced in more than 30 states.

Senator Boxer and Congressman DeFazio **introduced**

**(<http://www.boxer.senate.gov/press/release/boxer-defazio-introduce-bill-to-require-labeling-of-genetically-engineered-foods/>)** similar legislation in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, and in 2012, they **sent** **(<http://www.boxer.senate.gov/press/release/boxer-defazio-join-colleagues-in-urging-fda-to-require-labeling-of-genetically-engineered-foods/>)** a letter with 54 Senate and House colleagues, urging the FDA to require the labeling of GE foods.

The Senate bill is cosponsored by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Cory Booker (D-NJ). Representatives Adam Schiff (D-CA), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), Alan Grayson (D-FL), Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), David Cicilline (D-RI), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Jared Polis (D-CO), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Ann McLane Kuster (D-NH), Don Young (R-AK), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Dina Titus (D-NV), Jim McDermott (D-WA), Michael Honda (D-CA), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Brad Sherman (D-CA) and Gerald Connolly (D-VA) are the cosponsors of the House bill.

The *Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act* has broad support from organizations and businesses, including the Center for Food Safety, Consumers Union, Environmental Working Group, Just Label It, the National Farmers Union, Stonyfield Farms, Consumer Federation of America, AllergyKids Foundation, National Cooperative Grocers Association, New England Farmers Union, Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, Center for Environmental Health, Chefs Collaborative, Label GMOs, Alaska Trollers Association, Ben & Jerry's, Clif Bar & Company, Lundberg Family Farms, Nature's Path, Annie's Inc. and many others. A full list of organizations and businesses endorsing the bill can be found **here** **(<http://www.boxer.senate.gov/press/related/BoxerDeFazioLabelingEndorsementLetter%2021215.pdf>)**.



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