

The GMO labeling debate continues, and so do the scare tactics

By ACSH Staff — May 7, 2014



The question of whether or not to label foods containing

GMO ingredients has been a very hot topic for the past few years. The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board [recently took](#) ^[1] on this question, asking why GMO-containing foods should be labeled, if science has shown that GMO food is safe. This is the same question we've been asking since day one.

Even worse, the GMO labeling bills, which would require almost all packaged foods to be labeled, go a step further, serving to evoke unnecessary fear rather than supplying any useful information about nutrition. Although it was only a year or so ago that the Prop 37 labelling mandate was decisively voted down in California, now a new bill goes even farther, falsely alleging that United States government scientists have stated that the artificial insertion of genetic material into plants via genetic engineering can increase the levels of known toxicants or allergens in foods and create new toxicants or allergens with consequent health concerns. This claim is absolutely not supported by science. As the Times Editorial Board points out, this bill ignores the studies conducted by scientists not affiliated with industry who have found that GMOs are not harmful to human health in any way. Furthermore, the American Medical Association, the WHO, the FDA and the National Academy of Sciences have all concluded that GMOs are as safe as any other [food.]

The conclusion reached by the editorial board is this: Labeling laws should set a priority on providing information that significantly affects consumer health. They should be based on facts, not fear.

On a [related note](#) ^[2], the French Parliament has just approved a law which prohibits growing genetically modified maize (corn) in the European Union's top grain producer. And of course, this law is based on the public suspicion and widespread protests by environmentalists related to GMO foods rather than on sound science.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky says, It's the same story again. These labeling laws are not based on fact, but rather on unjustified fears that GMO foods are dangerous to health. The science does not support this claim. If a consumer really wants to make sure their food does not contain GMOs,

there are other ways of doing that. For example, consumers can choose to buy organic foods, shop at stores that are committed to selling only non-GMO foods or buy foods produced by companies who choose to label their foods as GMO free.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom agrees: How about requiring a label stating that certain foods were created by treating seeds with radiation or mutagenic chemicals? This is the only way to mutate the DNA of the plant, thus creating a (non-GM) *modified product*? Does this sound any better? I sure don't think so, but it has been standard practice for many decades, and the seedless bananas and watermelons you are eating were made in exactly this way. Perhaps Trader Joe's should put *this* label on all of their bananas: These bananas are NOT GM, but were created by using nuclear radiation and potent mutagens. After all, pro-labeling activists advocate putting useless information on labels, so why not this? I'm guessing the store would empty out as fast if it was on fire.

To learn more about agricultural biotechnology, make sure to take a look at our recently released publications which can be found [here](#) [3].

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[1] <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gmo-food-labeling-20140505-story.html>

[2] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/05/france-gmo-idUSL6N0NR2MZ20140505>

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