



CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW TO SET UP A MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

How do I set up a meeting with my Representative and Senators?

Meeting with your Representative and Senators is very easy. If you don't know who your Members of Congress are just click here to find out: <https://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/1881/getLocal.jsp>. You can see the list of current co-sponsors of the Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act here: http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/1881/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=13095. If you do know who your Representative and Senators are visit their website and click the "Contact" tab to see the list of their offices in your state and district.

Once you have found the list of offices, call the office which is closest to you and ask to be connected to the scheduler.

[Example: "Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent. I would like to speak with the office scheduler about scheduling a meeting with the Senator/Representative."]

What do I say when I request a meeting over the phone?

Once you are transferred to the office scheduler, use this template to request a meeting.

"Hello, my name is _____. I am a constituent and would like request an in-district meeting with Senator/Representative_____ during the August 2013 recess to discuss GMO labeling, which is of great importance to me and my family.

There are bills in both the House and the Senate entitled "The Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act", introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio and Senator Barbara Boxer. Those bill numbers are H.R. 1699 and S. 809.

When is the earliest the Senator or Representative would be available? *[Helpful Hint: Make sure you have your calendar open so you can quickly find a date and time that works for you].*"

Once you have scheduled your meeting make sure to thank the scheduler for his/her time.

What if my Member of Congress is not available to meet with me during the times I am available?

If your Member of Congress is not available to meet with you during the dates and times that you are available, ask to schedule a meeting with the relevant staff member in that office. Each office has a number of staff and each member of staff has assigned issue areas. It is good to meet with the

relevant staff person who works on the issue you want to talk about as they often guide your representative and advise on the actions and positions your representative should take. If you can build a good rapport with a staffer, then you can more regularly follow up and progress an issue.

What if my Member of Congress only schedules meetings online?

If the person you speak to says that they only schedule meetings online, ask for the name and email address of the scheduler. You can use this template to request a meeting via email. [*Note:* Some offices will have a meeting request form on their website, in which case just use this template for that web form.]

EMAIL SUBJECT: “Request for In-District Meeting”

“Dear [NAME OF YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS]:

I am one of your constituents and am writing to request an in-district meeting during the August 2013 congressional recess to discuss GMO labeling, which is of great importance to me and my family.

In the U.S., we pride ourselves on having choices and making informed decisions. Under current FDA policy, we don't have that choice when it comes to genetically engineered (GE) ingredients in the foods we purchase and feed our families. Already in 2013, 53 GE labeling bills have been introduced in 26 states, including Hawaii, Washington, Indiana, Missouri, and Vermont, with many more expected by year's end.

There are bills in both the House and the Senate entitled “The Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act”, introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio and Senator Barbara Boxer. Those bill numbers are H.R. 1699 and S. 809.

I am available to meet with you in your [NAME OF CITY] office on [Aug. XX or YY] at your convenience. If you are unavailable on those dates, I would be happy to work with your office to schedule another time to meet with you or a member of your staff.

Please let me know what would work best for you. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Your phone number]
[Your email address”

What if I have not heard back from the scheduler?

Schedulers can be quite busy during August. It is appropriate to allow a couple days for them to respond to your meeting request. If you have not heard back in 4-5 days, send a short follow-up email asking if they have been able to find a good time for you to meet with your Member of Congress.

I don't know anything about politics, what can I contribute?

You don't have to know anything about politics to convey why your Member of Congress should be aware of an issue. Your Member of Congress represents *you* and should know where you stand and why you stand for an issue.

WHAT TO KNOW FOR YOUR MEEETING

How do I dress for the meeting?

Dress respectably, but be comfortable.

How long should I expect to be able to meet?

An average meeting length is around 10-15 minutes so know what you want to say and say it succinctly. If the Member or staffer gets engaged in a conversation with you and becomes interested in the topic, the meeting could be much longer, but prepare to convey your message in a few minutes.

What should I bring to the meeting?

It is always helpful to bring the draft script that we provided you along with any talking points, background materials and fact sheets. But remember that your Member of Congress and their staff want to hear why an issue is important to you so don't read directly from the materials during your meeting. You should also bring along a camera or smart phone so you can snap a picture with you and your Member of Congress. If you do, send it to us at office@centerforfoodsafety.org and we'll put it up on our new Congressional blog and Facebook page.

How do I present myself in the meeting?

Be confident, friendly and professional. Staff members have a lot to do and many issues to manage. They will engage with you more meaningfully and more regularly if you conduct yourself in a friendly way. It is much more productive to offer support to help them see your point of view, rather than resorting to hostility and resistance in trying to turn them to your way of thinking.

Meeting with a Member of Congress or their staff is about relationship building and communicating your message on the issue you wish to discuss, clearly and personally.

What if they ask me questions I don't know the answer to?

Your role is to bring their attention to an issue that is of concern to you. Don't worry if you don't know the answer to a question. You aren't expected to be a walking, talking encyclopedia. Feel confident, not intimidated, if they ask a question you don't know the answer to. It is perfectly acceptable to simply take note of the question and say that you will get back to them, or recommend that they speak with us at the Center for Food Safety. You can then contact us, tell us who you met with, when and which congressional office they work for and we can reach out to answer any technical questions they may have.

Should I leave anything with my Rep / Senator?

It is always helpful to leave materials behind if you can so that they are reminded of the meeting at a later stage. You can leave either a fact sheet, issue summary or a newspaper or journal article that articulates your point on the issue. You can also recommend that they reach out to us at the Center for Food Safety for more scientific or policy focused conversation. Make sure to leave behind your contact details.

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR MEETING

How do I follow up after the meeting?

Send an email or letter thanking the Member of Congress or the staff person for meeting with you. Remind them briefly of what you discussed and say how you look forward to learning that they have done what you asked for – such as co-sponsor a bill or vote a certain way. Be sure to include your contact information at the end of the letter. If you haven't heard from them two weeks after the meeting, follow up again.

After you have had a meeting with your Member of Congress, Senator or their staff, please contact us at office@centerforfoodsafety.org and give us feedback on the meeting. Please detail who you met with, what their contact details are, the issue you discussed and what their comments were. This will be very helpful to us in moving things forward. We thank you for your actions and engagement. You make all the difference!

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR YOUR MEETING

Introductions

1. Introduce yourself briefly. Say where you live and what you do. You want your Member of Congress or their staff member to feel like they know you so that they care about the issues you are there to talk about.
2. If there is more than one participant allow each to say who they are and what they do in the community.
3. Ask the Member of Congress and/or staff member to introduce themselves. A good way to break the ice with staff members and get a feel for their role in the office is to ask how long they have worked for the Member of Congress and what issues they work on.

Acknowledgements

Thank your Member of Congress for any previous actions he/she has done that you have liked. If they are already supportive of the issue be sure to thank them for their support up front. (Again, you can check the list of current bill co-sponsors here:

http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/1881/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=13095)

Presenting Your Issue

One way to make sure you stay on track and effectively communicate the key issues and points is to share the materials you brought along with you to the meeting (talking points, bill summaries and fact sheets). These will help communicate your position on the issues. Try to briefly walk the person through the key points of the materials.

It is always helpful to use personal stories to underscore a point about the issue that brings the concern home to the lawmaker's district or state.

- Why does this matter to you and your family? Why does it matter in your state?
- Why should it matter to your Member of Congress?

Making Your Request

After you have discussed the issue and why you care about it. Ask your Member of Congress if he/she will co-sponsor the particular legislation or support issue.

If your Member of Congress already is a co-sponsor of the legislation you are supporting you can ask them if they are willing to take additional actions on the issue. A couple good suggestions are:

- Ask if they would be willing to contact the President or the pertinent Federal agency about the issue.
- Ask if they would be willing to write an op-ed in your local newspaper about the issue.
- Ask if they would be willing to speak about the issue on the floor of the House or Senate.

If your Member of Congress does not support the issue, ask them why not.

Ending Your Meeting

[Do Not Leave This Behind]

After you have made your request, ask if they have any questions and if there would be any helpful information that you could provide.

Make sure to thank them for their time and say that you will follow up shortly.

Talking Points: Support Federal GE Labeling Legislation **in Congress**

As Americans, we pride ourselves on our freedoms. Some of these freedoms strike at the most personal level, such as the freedom to choose what we eat and feed our families. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has neglected to protect this freedom, advocate for consumer rights, and prevent consumer deception by neglecting to require labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods. Absent clear labeling of GE ingredients, consumers are deprived necessary and important information about the foods they are purchasing. The FDA has recently made progress in modernizing its approach to food safety, but it has failed to reverse its two decade old anti-labeling policy for GE foods.

“The Genetically Engineered Food Right-To-Know Act” is a Commonsense Solution

In the spring of 2013, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) introduced “The Genetically Engineered Food Right-To-Know Act” (S. 809/H.R. 1699). The bill is a commonsense solution to inaction at the FDA and would apply to all foods regulated by the FDA, including whole foods, processed foods, and GE fish and seafood.

Consumers Have a Right to Know What They Purchase and Feed Their Families

FDA currently requires the labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes. Labeling genetically engineered (GE) food would increase consumer knowledge about the foods they purchase and feed their families.

The International Marketplace Has Already Agreed Upon Labeling

Sixty-four countries around the world require the labeling of GE foods including the countries in the European Union, Russia, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand and many others. The Codex Alimentarius, maintained by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization, adopted a text that stated that governments are free to decide on whether and how to label foods produced with genetic engineering.

FDA’s Labeling Policy for Genetically Engineered Foods is Outdated

In a two decade old policy statement, the FDA allowed GE foods to be marketed without labeling because it felt at the time that they were not “materially” different from other foods. Yet, commonsense would indicate that a GE corn that produces its own insecticide is materially different from traditional corn that does not. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has recognized that these foods are different for patent purposes, why doesn’t the FDA?

Overwhelming Majority of Consumers Continue to Demand Labeling

Polls have repeatedly shown that the overwhelming majority of consumers, over 90%, believe the federal government should require mandatory labeling of GE foods.

- Over 1.5 million public comments have been submitted to the FDA in support of GE food labeling; the largest public response FDA has ever received.
- So far in 2013, 26 states have introduced bills that would require the labeling of GE foods. Recently, Connecticut’s GE labeling law was passed by the legislature.

Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods Has Economic Benefits

Mandatory identification of foods produced with genetic engineering can be a critical method of preserving the economic value of exports or domestically sensitive markets with labeling requirements for GE foods. By giving American consumers information fundamental to their choices in the marketplace, we protect and promote the integrity and health of our economy.

FDA Has Legal Authority to Require Labeling to Ensure Consumer Understanding

Section 201(n) of the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act was written by Congress to prevent misleading labeling or advertising by clarifying that a food label is misbranded if it, among other things, omits “material” information. Instead, FDA’s outdated interpretation actively facilitates continued misbranding that Congress originally intended FDA to prevent.

FAQ's About Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods

Q: What are genetically engineered foods?

A: Genetically engineered foods are created by artificially inserting genetic material from one or more organisms into the DNA of another, creating what is commonly referred to as a genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organism (GMO).

Q: What are examples of genetically engineered foods?

A: It has been estimated that upwards of 75% of processed foods on supermarket shelves— from soda to soup, crackers to condiments—contain genetically engineered ingredients like corn and soy. However, more GE foods are being designed to be directly consumed by people, like GE salmon, GE apples, and GE sweet corn.

Q: Is genetic engineering merely an extension of traditional breeding?

A: Genetic engineering is a new technologyⁱ that has been developed to defy the limitations of traditional breeding by splicing the genetic material from one or more organisms into a crop or animal. Examples of GE foods already on the market or seeking approval include:

- corn that produces its own insecticide derived from a toxin found in soils
- soy and sugar beets that resist exposure to herbicides
- apples that do not turn brown for weeks after they have been cut
- salmon with eel DNA that makes it grow twice as fast as other farmed salmon

Q: Will labeling genetically engineered food confuse consumers?

A: Overwhelming public demand, most over 90%, believe the federal government should require mandatory labeling of GE foods.ⁱⁱ The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires the labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes; providing basic information does not confuse consumers; it enables them to make choices, and consumer choice is an essential right.

Q: Will labeling genetically engineered food violate international trade agreements?

A: No international agreements prohibit the mandatory identification of foods produced through genetic engineering.

- In fact, 64 countries around the world have mandatory labeling laws for GE foods including South Korea, Japan, Brazil, China, the United Kingdom, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and many others.
- The Codex Alimentarius, maintained by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization, adopted a text that stated that governments are free to decide on whether and how to label foods produced with genetic engineering.

Q: Will labeling GE food increase costs to consumers?

A: Changing FDA's current and outdated policy would simply add a label to genetically engineered foods. Companies frequently change their packaging and therefore labeling. Producers and processors are also already required to disclose a variety of information about their products, including ingredients, additives, and production processes (and GE content for foreign markets).

Q: Would GE food labeling be unconstitutional?

A: Congress can require that GE foods be labeled based on legitimate governmental interest.

Q: Why do we need a label for GE food if the Federal government already ensures that genetically engineered crops and food are safe for human health and the environment?

A: Actually, neither the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA),ⁱⁱⁱ the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)^{iv}, nor the FDA^v have conducted any long-term human health or environmental impact studies on the safety of GE foods or crops. In fact, all data submitted through FDA's voluntary safety consultations are provided by the developer and no independent testing is required. That is why experts like the World

Health Organization and the American Medical Association have called for pre-market safety assessments of GE foods.

Q: Won't GE food labels mislead consumers into thinking the food is dangerous?

A: If foods are found to be dangerous they are taken off the market, not labeled as such. The government mandates food labeling not based on safety, but whether consumers view such information as important, and whether the omission of label information may mislead a consumer. GE food labeling will serve to increase consumer understanding and promote transparency.

Q: Are GE crops better for the environment?

A: Laboratory and field evidence shows that GE crops can harm beneficial insects,^{vi} increase pesticide use^{vii} and transfer GE genes^{viii} in the environment, thereby contaminating neighboring crops and creating potentially uncontrollable weeds.^{ix}

ⁱ Genetically engineered foods are created by artificially inserting genetic material from one or more organisms into the DNA of another, creating what is commonly referred to as a genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organism (GMO).

ⁱⁱ A list of public opinion polls is available here: <http://gefoodlabels.org/gmo-labeling/polls-on-gmo-labeling/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Sally McCommon, USDA, "Regulating Products of Biotechnology," Economic Perspectives, US Department of State, Vol. 4, #4, October 1999.

^{iv} "Genetic Genie: The Premature Commercial Release of Genetically Engineered Bacteria," Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, September, 1995. From PEER, 2001 S Street, Washington DC 20009.

^v Statement of James Maryanski, FDA Biotechnology Coordinator, Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, October 7, 1999.

^{vi} Rosi-Marshall, E.J. et al. (2007). Toxins in transgenic crop byproducts may affect headwater stream ecosystems. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 104(41).

^{vii} Benbrook, C. (2012) "Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops and Pesticide Use in the U.S.: The First Sixteen Years," *Environmental Sciences Europe* 2012, 24:24. doi:10.1186/2190-4715-24-24.

^{viii} Final Environmental Impact Statement on Roundup Ready Alfalfa, USDA APHIS, December 2010, Appendix V, V-64 to V-65

^{ix} Weed Science Society of America (2010). *Glycine-resistant weeds by species and country*. Lawrence: Author. Available online at <http://www.weedscience.org/Summary/UspeciesMOA.asp?lstMOAID=12&fmrHRACGroup=Go>



Food Safety Fact Sheet

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GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD: THE LABELING DEBATE

IF YOU WANT to know if your food was irradiated or contains gluten, aspartame, high fructose corn syrup, trans-fats or MSG, you simply read the label. But if you want to know if your food was genetic engineered, you're not going to find any information on the package.

Why? Because despite the fact that 64 countries around the world (including all European Union member states, Japan, Australia, Brazil, Russia and China) grant their citizens the right to know what is in their food, the United States continues to ignore consumer demands to label GE foods. Numerous pollsⁱ have indicated that more than 90 percent of U.S. consumers believe GE foods should be labeled, yet the U.S. has refused to grant its citizens this basic right.

UNLABELED, UNTESTED, AND YOU'RE EATING IT

Consumers across the country are being allowed to purchase and consume unlabeled GE foods, without our knowledge or consent. Already, this novel technology has invaded our grocery stores and our kitchens by fundamentally altering some of our most important staple food crops. Currently, more than 88 percent of U.S. corn is genetically engineered; as are 93 percent of soybeans and 94 percent of cottonⁱⁱ (cottonseed oil is often used in food products). According to industry estimates, up to 95 percent of sugar beets may now be GE varieties. It has been estimated that upwards of 75 percent of processed foods on supermarket shelves— from soda to soup, crackers to condiments—contain genetically engineered ingredients.

The United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the American Medical Association have all called for mandatory safety testing of GE foods. Nonetheless, FDA does no independent



testing of their safety, even though documents uncovered in CFS litigation show that scientists within FDA indicated that GE foods could pose serious risks. FDA makes no determination of safety; instead, the agency only holds a voluntary (and confidential) meeting with industry before commercialization of these foods, and relies entirely on the industry's conclusion and the data the industry chooses to show them.

Yet even the limited data available raises cause for concern. A number of studies over the past decade have revealed that GE foods can pose serious risks to humans, domesticated animals, wildlife, and the environment. Human health effects can include higher risks of toxicity, allergenicity, antibiotic resistance, and immune-suppression.

Research has also shown that the use of genetic engineering in agriculture has led to a substantial increase in the use of certain herbicides and insecticides, causing increased harm to the environment—a direct contradiction to industry's false promises that these new technologies would reduce the need for pesticides. Since GE crops entered the U.S. market more than a decade ago, herbicide use on corn, soybeans, and cotton has dramatically increased, by a total of more than 527 million pounds.^{iv} The unfortunate overreliance on herbicides has also triggered an epidemic of herbicide-resistant superweeds, which now infest 50-60 million acres in 32 states^v, which will only lead to the use of yet more—and more toxic—herbicides.

THE STATE OF GE FOOD LABELING

So why has the FDA not acted to require labeling? In the spring of 2000, FDA announced that labeling of GE foods would remain

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD: THE LABELING DEBATE

voluntary, even though there was no indication that any company would actually volunteer to label them—and in the thirteen years since, none have. Despite the long-term and wide-ranging risks, Congress has not passed, nor has the FDA implemented, a single law intended to manage GE crops and foods responsibly.

Just over twenty years ago, FDA decided that GE foods need not be labeled because they were not “materially” different from other foods. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act requires the FDA to prevent consumer deception by clarifying that a food label is false and/or misleading if, among other things, it omits significant, “material” information. However the FDA has self-limited what it considers “material” in this context to only changes in food that could be noted by taste, smell, or other senses. Applying 19th century policy to 21st century technology, the FDA declared GE foods to be “substantially equivalent” to conventionally produced foods, since GE foods can’t be “sensed” in this way. Hence no labeling was required.

The biotech industry has also fiercely opposed GE labeling, and has convinced many in Congress and FDA that such a label would “mislead” consumers into thinking the food is dangerous. But we don’t label dangerous foods; we take them off the market. The government mandates food labeling not based on safety, but upon “material” change that consumers should be informed about. In fact, the agency already requires labels for over 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes in food production, for all kinds of reasons, none of which are because the food has been deemed dangerous.

The decision not to require labeling of GE food was, and remains, a political decision, not a scientific one. FDA must move into the new century and give consumers the information they overwhelmingly believe to be important, for a host of health, environmental, ethical, and religious reasons.

THE CFS LEGAL PETITION TO LABEL GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

To address this outdated policy, in 2011, Center for Food Safety filed a formal Legal Petition to FDA to require labeling of genetically engineered foods (Docket No. FDA-2011-P-0723-0001). The legal petition demands that FDA issue new regulations requiring labeling of all foods produced using genetic engineering, and modernize the agency’s decades-old definition of what constitutes “material” change. GE crops contain novel bacterial and viral genes never seen before in food. They are so novel that biotech companies like Monsanto have been granted dozens of patents on them. The patentability of GE foods demonstrates

that they are materially different, providing yet another reason they require labeling. As of 2013, more than one and a half million Americans have filed comments with the agency in support of our petition, and the number continues to climb.

STATE AND FEDERAL LABELING INITIATIVES

As concerned citizens across the country grow tired of waiting for the federal government to take action, they are turning to state and local governments. In 2013 alone, over half the states in the country introduced bills that would require labeling for GE foods.^{vi} Many of these bills use language that CFS crafted, or are based on CFS’s model GE labeling bill. On the heels of the narrow defeat of California’s landmark Proposition 37, states from Washington to Vermont are debating state legislation and citizen-driven ballot initiatives to do what the federal government won’t: label GE food. CFS co-authored both Prop 37 and I-522.

Center for Food Safety has worked with grassroots movements in individual states, counties, and municipalities across the country to improve the oversight of genetically engineered crops and foods, and to introduce labeling legislation and ballot initiatives. To this end, CFS has a number of “model” state bills and local initiatives available. Interested parties seeking counsel on getting an initiative started in your city or state should contact CFS at office@centerforfoodsafety.org.

Most recently, thanks to your tireless support, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) have introduced new Federal legislation that would require the labeling of all GE foods; the first labeling bill to be introduced in the Senate in over a decade!

TAKE ACTION: DEMAND LABELING OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Here in America, we pride ourselves on having choices and making informed decisions. But we don’t have that choice when it comes to GE ingredients in the foods we purchase and feed our families. It’s time our state and federal governments listen to consumers and require labeling of all GE foods.

**To take action visit our website at
www.centerforfoodsafety.org**

i Center for Food Safety, Genetically Engineered Food Labeling Laws Map, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/ge-map>

ii Center for Food Safety, U.S. Polls on GE Food Labeling, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/976/ge-food-labeling/us-polls-on-ge-food-labeling>

iii Jorge Fernandez-Cornejo, Genetically engineered varieties of corn, upland cotton, and soybeans, by State and for the United States, 2000-12, Washington, D.C.: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2012. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/adoption-of-genetically-engineered-crops-in-the-us.aspx#.UUu-Pnc4tiM>

iv Benbrook, Charles M. “Impacts of genetically engineered crops on pesticide use in the U.S. — the first sixteen years” *Environmental Sciences Europe* 2012, 24:24. doi:10.1186/2190-4715-24-24

v Ibid

vi Center for Food Safety, State Labeling Initiatives, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/976/ge-food-labeling/state-labeling-initiatives>