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17 **THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
18 **FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

19 CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY and
20 CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
21 HEALTH,

22 *Plaintiffs,*

23 v.

24 SONNY PERDUE, Secretary of the United
25 States Department of Agriculture; BRUCE
26 SUMMERS, Administrator of the
27 Agricultural Marketing Service; and the
28 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE,

Defendants.

) Case No. 18-4633

)
)
) **COMPLAINT FOR**
) **DECLARATORY AND**
) **EQUITABLE RELIEF**

1 **COMPLAINT**

2 Plaintiffs Center for Food Safety and Center for Environmental Health, on behalf of
3 themselves and their members allege as follows:

4 **INTRODUCTION AND NATURE OF ACTION**

5 1. This is an action seeking declaratory and equitable relief against the U.S.
6 Department of Agriculture (USDA, agency, or Defendants) regarding that agency’s failure to
7 comply with mandatory deadlines established by the 2016 Federal Bioengineered Food
8 Disclosure Standards Act, 7 U.S.C. § 1639 *et seq.* (hereinafter the “GE Labeling Act” or “the
9 Act”).

10 2. Plaintiffs Center for Food Safety (CFS) and Center for Environmental Health
11 (CEH) challenge the failure of Defendants Sonny Perdue, Secretary of the United States
12 Department of Agriculture; Bruce Summers, Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing
13 Service (AMS), an Administrative Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
14 the United States Department of Agriculture (collectively USDA) to comply with the GE
15 Labeling Act. This case is brought pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 5
16 U.S.C. § 706(1), for agency action that is “unlawfully withheld.”

17 3. The American people have advocated for the mandatory labeling of genetically
18 engineered (GE) foods for nearly two decades. Polls show that over 90% of U.S. residents
19 support requiring the labeling of GE foods. Sixty-four countries around the world already require
20 such on-package labeling, including many U.S. trade partners such as all of the European Union,
21 Japan, China, and Australia. Consumers have become increasingly aware that, while few whole
22 foods are GE, the majority of processed foods are produced with GE ingredients. The public
23 recognizes that having thousands of processed food products containing unlabeled GE
24 ingredients is deceptive and misleading or, at best, confusing. The American public deserves full
25 disclosure as well as the right to transparency and free choice in the marketplace, and they have
26 waited long enough for these rights.

1 4. This case is about giving Americans these long overdue rights as soon as possible,
2 making the mandated GE labeling as meaningful as possible, and ensuring the public's right to
3 know what is in their food. All of which was mandated by Congress in the GE Labeling Act.

4 5. Prior to the GE Labeling Act, in the absence of federal leadership on the GE
5 labeling issue, states stepped into the breach, passing several labeling laws. Connecticut and
6 Maine both passed GE food labeling laws in 2013, albeit with their effective dates contingent on
7 the passage of similar standards in other states. In 2014, Vermont became the first state to pass a
8 mandatory GE labeling law, which would have gone into effect in 2016. In anticipation of
9 Vermont's law, numerous major food producers began labeling their food for GE content. In
10 response, Congress finally passed the GE Labeling Act in July of 2016, preempting state laws
11 and setting a federal standard in their place.

12 6. The GE Labeling Act, the first federal law to establish a nationwide system
13 requiring disclosure of GE foods, went into effect July 29, 2016. The Act's purpose is to provide
14 Americans with the information they need to make informed food decisions by setting a
15 nationwide "bioengineered," or GE, food disclosure standard. The statute establishes basic
16 standards, but leaves much of the detail for USDA to set up in its implementing regulations. The
17 statute preempted state laws requiring GE labeling, but until USDA issues the regulations, the
18 statute is an empty vessel: there can be no federally required disclosures.

19 7. Understanding the urgency of the issue, Congress mandated express deadlines in
20 the statute for USDA's compliance. These included, *inter alia*, a one-year deadline to conduct a
21 study on the accessibility of potential electronic or digital disclosure methods, and a two-year
22 deadline by which time USDA "shall" have established the statute's implementing regulations. 7
23 U.S.C. § 1639b(a). Congress's use of repeated deadlines underscores the entire statutory
24 scheme's congressional intent: that this process must be conducted and completed in a timely
25 manner.

26 8. The statutory deadline for the completion of the final regulations implementing
27 the statute and establishing the national disclosure standard for GE foods was July 29, 2018, or
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1 two years after the enactment of the statute. That express statutory deadline has now passed, and
2 USDA has failed to establish a national disclosure standard in contravention of Congress's
3 commands.

4 9. USDA's failure to implement a national disclosure standard is withholding
5 information from the public, a practice that is inimical to the democratic process. U.S. consumers
6 have already waited decades for mandatory GE labeling, and further delay of the final rule has
7 caused still more harm to the public and the stakeholders. USDA must finish its rulemaking
8 process and issue the statute's implementing regulations.

9 **JURISDICTION**

10 10. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal
11 question) and 28 U.S.C. § 1346 (United States as Defendant).

12 11. Plaintiffs have a right to bring this action pursuant to the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 702.

13 12. The relief requested is specifically authorized pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 706(1)
14 (compelling unlawfully withheld and unreasonably delayed agency action), 28 U.S.C. § 1651
15 (writs), and 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201–2202 (declaratory relief).

16 13. An actual controversy exists between the parties within the meaning of 28 U.S.C.
17 § 2201 (declaratory judgments).

18 **VENUE**

19 14. Venue properly lies in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) because one or
20 more of the Plaintiffs reside in this District.

21 **PARTIES**

22 15. Plaintiff Center for Food Safety (CFS) brings this action on behalf of itself and its
23 members. CFS is a public interest, non-profit, membership organization that has offices in San
24 Francisco, CA; Portland, OR; and Washington, D.C. CFS represents over 950,000 members,
25 from every state in the country. USDA's continued failure to adhere to mandatory deadlines
26 established by the GE Labeling Act has adversely affected CFS and its members.

1 16. CFS’s fundamental mission is to protect food, farmers, and the environment from
2 the harms of industrial agriculture. A large part of that mission is championing transparency in
3 the food system and preserving informed consumer choice, including the labeling of genetically
4 engineered foods.

5 17. For over two decades CFS has been the leading U.S. public interest organization
6 working on the issue of agricultural biotechnology. Part of CFS’s mission is to ensure that GE
7 organisms that could adversely affect public health, agriculture, and the environment are
8 adequately labeled and properly regulated. CFS has a major program area specific to GE
9 organism oversight, and numerous staff members—scientific, policy, campaign, and legal—
10 whose work encompasses the topic. CFS staff members are recognized experts in the field and
11 are intimately familiar with the issue of GE foods, their inadequate oversight, their risks, and
12 their adverse impacts.

13 18. In accordance with its organizational missions to reduce harms caused by
14 industrial agriculture and champion transparency throughout the food production system, CFS
15 has long been committed to securing mandatory GE food labeling across the country. CFS has
16 worked closely with dozens of state legislatures and leaders in U.S. Congress on GE food issues
17 and GE food labeling legislation. For example, in 2011, CFS drafted and filed a formal legal
18 rulemaking petition with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), on behalf of over 650
19 companies and organizations, calling on the FDA to require the mandatory labeling of all GE
20 foods, which garnered over 1.4 million individual public comments in support. In the void of
21 federal leadership, several states stepped in to protect the public’s right to know, and to that end,
22 CFS also assisted in the successful passage of several state labeling laws. For many years, CFS
23 has spearheaded nationwide grassroots efforts to inform consumers across the country about GE
24 foods and GE labeling.

25 19. Plaintiff Center for Environmental Health (CEH) brings this action on behalf of
26 itself and its members. CEH is located in Oakland, CA. Founded in 1996, CEH is a nonprofit
27 organization dedicated to protecting the public from environmental and public health hazards.

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1 CEH is committed to environmental justice, promoting a safe and sustainable food supply,
2 supporting communities in their quest for a safer environment, and fostering corporate
3 accountability. CEH works to protect people from toxic chemicals through engagement with
4 communities, businesses, and as a government watchdog to demand practices that are safe for
5 human health and the environment. CEH promotes safer food and farming to provide families
6 the right to know what they are feeding their families, including through food labeling, and to
7 help people avoid genetically engineered foods, harmful pesticides, food additives, and other
8 health and safety threats. CEH works in support of safer, sustainable food production that serves
9 to regenerate natural resources, support healthier food for consumers, and create healthier
10 environments for farmers, farm workers, and rural communities. CEH's scientific investigations,
11 food safety testing, legal advocacy and litigation, and work with state and national food
12 advocacy coalitions all converge around the goals of ending unsafe, unsustainable food
13 production practices and supporting ecological, organic alternatives that promote healthy
14 farming and a healthier food supply. CEH's fundamental mission includes securing transparency
15 on food products, including GE foods, to ensure that their members and American consumers
16 know what they are feeding their families.

17 20. CEH has long worked to secure accurate food labeling for consumers, including
18 the labeling of GE foods. For example, CEH worked to pass Proposition 37 in California in
19 2014, which would have mandated labeling of GE foods. Prop 37 in California, like other state-
20 based GE labeling initiatives such as Vermont's Act 120, that lead to the enactment of the GE
21 Labeling Act. CEH has an interest, organizationally, and on behalf of its members, in the timely
22 labeling of GE foods nationwide. CEH members have waited years for mandatory GE food
23 disclosure and USDA's failure to adhere to the GE Labeling Act's mandatory deadlines
24 adversely affects CEH and its members.

25 21. Defendant Sonny Perdue is sued in his official capacity as USDA Secretary. As
26 Secretary, Mr. Perdue has the ultimate responsibility for USDA's activities and policies and for
27 the implementation of the GE Labeling Act.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**I. THE NEED FOR GE FOOD LABELING.**

28. Consumers have the right to know whether the foods they purchase were produced with genetic engineering, so they can make informed purchasing decisions. Mandatory labeling is necessary to ensure that consumers are fully and reliably informed about the products they purchase and consume. Such labels provide informed consent, and prevent consumer deception or misleading labeling by omission. Polls consistently show that the overwhelming majority of Americans want to know whether their food has been genetically engineered or contains GE ingredients.

29. Sixty-four countries, including Japan, South Korea, China, Australia, Russia, India, the European Union member states, and other key U.S. trading partners, already have laws mandating labeling of GE foods. Although the first GE crops were approved in the U.S. in the 1990s, U.S. consumers are still awaiting mandatory GE disclosure on food labels.

30. People want to know if food is produced using GE for numerous reasons: health, personal, economic, environmental, religious, and cultural. For example, on the human health side, the public knows that FDA, the Agency charged with ensuring the safety of most foods, does not actually independently test the food safety of GE foods or require them to be tested. FDA does not “approve” GE foods for safety; rather, the Agency has confidential meetings with industry in which it merely reviews the industry’s own testing—and even that is only voluntary. Market entry for GE foods is based solely on confidential industry research.

31. Scientific studies have shown that genetic engineering of plants and animals can and has caused unintended consequences. Manipulating genes via genetic engineering and inserting them into organisms is an imprecise process. The results are not always predictable or controllable. Mixing plant, animal, bacterial, and viral genes through genetic engineering, in combinations that cannot occur in nature, can produce results that lead to adverse health or environmental consequences.

1 32. U.S. government scientists have stated that the artificial insertion of genetic
2 material into plants via genetic engineering can cause a variety of significant problems with plant
3 foods. Such genetic engineering may have consequential health concerns such as an increase in
4 the levels of known toxicants and food allergens or the creation of new toxicants and food
5 allergens.

6 33. Further, independent scientists are prohibited from conducting safety and risk-
7 assessments of GE materials used in food products due to industry restrictions on research of
8 those materials. There are no long-term or epidemiological studies in the U.S. that have
9 examined the safety of human consumption of GE foods. Without GE labeling, there is no
10 accountability or traceability to link such foods to proliferating public health problems.
11 Mandatory labeling of GE foods can provide a method for detecting, on a large epidemiological
12 scale, the potential health effects of consuming such foods.¹ These facts rightly give consumers
13 pause; disclosure through labeling allows them to make their own choices about whether to buy
14 and consume GE foods.

15 34. Additionally, consumers want the ability to make purchase decisions that align
16 with their values. On the environmental side, GE crops are a key cog of inherently unsustainable
17 industrial agriculture, and cause significant adverse environmental impacts. GE crops are
18 essentially a pesticide-promoting technology: The overwhelming majority of commercial GE
19 crops are genetically engineered by pesticide companies, such as Monsanto, Dow Chemical, and
20 Bayer (now the owner of Monsanto), to withstand herbicide application (with their pesticide
21 products) or to produce their own pesticides. Consequently, these GE crops have dramatically
22 increased the overall pesticide output of American agriculture into our environment. Monsanto's
23 GE crops, "Roundup Ready" crops resistant to glyphosate, have made glyphosate the most used
24 pesticide in history, with over 280 million pounds applied in U.S. agriculture in 2012 alone.

25 _____
26 ¹ Philip J. Landrigan, M.D., and Charles Benbrook, Ph.D., *GMOs, Herbicides, and Public*
27 *Health*, New England Journal of Medicine (2015), <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1505660#t=article>.

1 Reliance on these pesticide-promoting GE crop systems has caused a number of harms, including
2 widespread pollution of our waterways and native ecosystems, injury to beneficial insects such
3 as pollinators, and harm to soil health. The well-established environmental impacts of GE crops
4 (and their attendant pesticides) are widespread and dire. People reasonably want to align their
5 food purchasing choices with their environmental values.

6 35. Protection of the environment and protection of public health are intimately
7 intertwined. In 2015, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on
8 Cancer concluded that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans. Evidence unearthed in a
9 recent case in this district shows the willingness of the agrochemical industry to engage in
10 morally objectionable tactics to downplay potential carcinogenic effects of glyphosate.

11 36. On the agricultural side, over the past decade transgenic contamination of
12 traditional crops from GE crops has caused U.S. farmers billions of dollars in market losses.
13 Numerous foreign markets with restrictions on genetically engineered foods have restricted
14 imports of U.S. crops due to concerns about such forms of production. Some foreign markets are
15 choosing to purchase agricultural products from countries other than the U.S. because GE crops
16 are not identified in the U.S., which makes it impossible for buyers to determine whether
17 products meet their national labeling laws or restrictions.

18 37. Further, the widespread adoption of crops engineered for pesticide resistance has
19 proliferated an epidemic of resistant "superweeds" now covering more than 60 million acres of
20 U.S. farmland. These weeds have flourished, infesting farm fields and roadsides, complicating
21 weed control for farmers, and forcing farmers to resort to more and increasingly toxic pesticides.
22 Many consumers do not want to support unsustainable agricultural practices that harm American
23 farmers and instead want to make choices that align with their support of family farmers, not
24 agrochemical companies.

25 38. Juxtaposed against these facts, the U.S. public is discovering that the industry's
26 hype about genetically engineered foods is false: Despite billions of dollars in research and
27 nearly two decades of commercialization, no GE crops are commercially produced to increase
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1 yields, reduce world hunger, or mitigate global warming. Rather, the commercial reality is that
2 agrochemical companies have largely succeeded in engineering these crops to be resistant to the
3 companies' own products—pesticides—in order to reap huge profits.

4 39. Studies show that, due to the lack of mandatory labeling, many American
5 consumers are under an incorrect assumption as to whether the food they purchase is produced
6 with GE. Disclosure of whether or not foods are genetically engineered will reduce this
7 consumer confusion and deception.

8 40. Consumers also want mandatory labeling for religious, cultural, ethical, moral,
9 personal, or dietary reasons. Without mandatory disclosures, consumers of GE foods may
10 unknowingly violate their beliefs or health restrictions. Labeling will provide consumers with the
11 information they need to make safe and informed decisions.

12 **II. PROCEDURAL HISTORY.**

13 41. The GE Labeling Act was signed into law on July 29, 2016. The primary goals of
14 the Act are to “(1) establish a national mandatory bioengineered food disclosure standard with
15 respect to any bioengineered food and any food that may be bioengineered; and (2) establish
16 such requirements and procedures as the Secretary determines necessary to carry out the
17 standard.” 7 U.S.C. § 1639b(a).

18 42. Prior to drafting a proposed rule, USDA presented the public with 30 questions
19 pertaining to mandatory GE food labeling as a means of collecting stakeholder opinions. The
20 questions covered a range of topics such as terminology, definitions, threshold, and scope.
21 USDA posted these questions on its website and collected public input from June 28, 2017
22 through August 25, 2017. The Agency received comments from over 112,000 concerned citizens
23 and organizations. In July 2017, CFS submitted detailed comments to USDA on the scoping “30
24 questions” notice.

25 43. Additionally, the statute requires that USDA conduct a study to inform its
26 rulemaking. The required study concerns one of the most controversial aspects of the Act: the
27 potential to allow food companies to use “digital or electronic” disclosures for GE foods.

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1 Correctly recognizing how unprecedented and controversial this potential option was, Congress
2 mandated that USDA first specifically study the efficacy, or lack thereof, of this type of
3 disclosure and its impacts on consumers and retailers. The Act mandated the study analyze,
4 among other things, the “potential technological challenges that may impact whether consumers
5 would have access to the bioengineering disclosure through electronic or digital disclosure
6 methods,” before the statutorily imposed deadline of July 29, 2017. *Id.* § 1639b(c)(1). This study
7 was included in the Act to measure the efficacy of the electronic/digital link option in
8 accomplishing the goals of the Act.

9 44. The Act also required public consultation on the study stating, “[i]n conducting
10 the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall solicit and consider comments from the
11 public.” *Id.* § 1639b(c)(2). Public comment was necessary to allow for successful understanding
12 of consumer behavior.

13 *The Missed Study Deadline and Subsequent Litigation*

14 45. USDA failed to finish and publicly release the study by the statutory deadline.
15 USDA also failed to hold public comment on the study by the statutory deadline. Because the
16 study was necessary to inform USDA’s ultimate rulemaking decision and what type of disclosure
17 is mandated, CFS and its members were injured by their inability to review and participate in the
18 mandated study and public comment process. USDA’s withholding of the 2017 study negated
19 CFS and its members’ procedural rights to participate in the implementation of the GE Labeling
20 Act. Accordingly, CFS filed suit pursuant to the APA against USDA, for its failure to comply
21 with the Act’s deadline. *Center for Food Safety v. Perdue, et al.*, No. 17-cv-04967-JSW (N.D.
22 Cal. 2017). Shortly thereafter USDA publicly released the study and agreed to hold comment on
23 it, mooted the case, which Plaintiffs’ then voluntarily dismissed.

24 46. It is unknown why USDA did not release the 2017 study until forced to do so
25 through litigation. But very likely it is because the study is not at all supportive of the use of
26 electronic or digital forms of GE food disclosure. Among other relevant findings, all of which go
27 to the factors specifically enumerated by Congress in the Act, the study concluded that
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1 technological challenges, such as lack of technical knowledge, prevent consumers from
2 acquiring the necessary GE information via methods of digital disclosure. The study found
3 further obstacles, such as lack of consumer association between digital links and additional food
4 information. The study found that 100 percent of consumers polled did not recognize digital
5 links were associated with food info. Additionally, the study found the use of digital disclosure
6 to be inimical to various populations such as those 65 years of age and older as well as those
7 living in rural communities. This is due to the disparate rates of smartphone ownership across
8 varying demographics. The complete study, containing additional examples of the inefficacy of
9 digital disclosure, can be found on USDA's website.

10 47. As these non-exhaustive examples show, the 2017 study found significant
11 problems with the efficacy of digital and electronic disclosure; its analysis of every factor
12 enumerated by Congress in the Act weighed against such disclosures being sufficient. Thus, the
13 2017 study strongly supports a conclusion by USDA that U.S. consumers will not have sufficient
14 access to GE food disclosure through electronic or digital disclosure alone.

15 *The Final Rule Deadline*

16 48. Despite USDA's knowing the July 29, 2018 hard deadline set by Congress to
17 issue the final rules, and multiple media reports that the proposed rules were imminent and
18 planned to be release for public comment by the end of 2017, USDA in fact did not issue the
19 draft rules by the end of 2017, for unknown reasons. Instead, USDA did not issue the proposed
20 draft rules until many months later, on May 4, 2018. National Bioengineered Food Disclosure
21 Standard, 83 Fed. Reg. 19860 (May 4, 2018).

22 49. USDA's May 4 proposed rule finally set forth some proposed metrics for the rule
23 for comment, but in other instances made several proposals instead of just one it was endorsing,
24 or continued to leave other major questions unanswered with a definitive proposal. For example,
25 as to a de minimis threshold of GE content, USDA set forth three options rather than one
26 proposal. For on-package labeling, the agency gave multiple potential symbols. For the scope of
27 the classification, the agency gave two vastly different options, as to whether highly refined GE
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1 foods, which are the vast majority of all GE foods, would be included or not. And the proposal
 2 did not make any recommendation whatsoever as to the efficacy of electronic or digital forms of
 3 labeling and its own 2017 study's analysis and conclusions.

4 50. USDA opened a 60-day comment period on the proposal, with a deadline of July
 5 3, 2018. CFS submitted comments on the proposed rule.

6 51. USDA has failed to implement a national mandatory GE food disclosure standard
 7 by the July 29, 2018 deadline.

8 *USDA's Repeated Acknowledgements of the Deadline*

9 52. USDA's failure to comply with the statute is contrary, not only to the law, but to
 10 the Agency's own interpretation of the law and public recognition of its mandatory duties.
 11 USDA has repeatedly acknowledged its duty to comply with the statutory deadline.

12 53. For example, a July 28, 2017 USDA website post states that:

13 The National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard Law was
 14 enacted by Congress on July 29, 2016. AMS has two years to
 15 establish the standard and the procedures necessary for
 16 implementation. AMS is seeking input from stakeholders in order
 17 to establish the final rule by the mandated July 2018 deadline.²

18 54. In other example, in the May 3, 2018 announcement, USDA preemptively refused
 19 to permit any extension to the 60-day comment period on its rule proposal, citing the mandatory
 20 statutory deadline:

21 The proposed rule is open for comment for 60 days. Due to the
 22 Congressionally mandated timeline for this rulemaking, the
 23 comment period will not be extended, so it is important that
 24 anyone interested file comments in a timely manner.³

24 ² U.S. Department of Agriculture, *USDA Seeks Input in Developing a Proposed Bioengineered*
 25 *Food Disclosure Rule* (June 28, 2017) [https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-seeks-input-](https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-seeks-input-developing-proposed-bioengineered-food-disclosure-rule)
 26 [developing-proposed-bioengineered-food-disclosure-rule](https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-seeks-input-developing-proposed-bioengineered-food-disclosure-rule) (last visited July 31, 2018) (emphasis
 27 added).

27 ³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *USDA Seeks Comments on Proposed Rule for National*
 28 *Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard* (May 3, 2018) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press->

1
2 55. Another example is a 2016 USDA Presidential Transition briefing document,
3 received through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which lays out the intent and scope of
4 the Act, reiterating USDA's knowledge of the statutory deadline:

5 The legislation amends the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946,
6 and requires that within two years of the Law's enactment USDA's
7 Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) establish a mandatory
8 national bioengineered food disclosure standard and the procedures
9 necessary to implement the national standard.

10 56. Another USDA email, dated September 28th, 2016, includes a quoted statement
11 made by former United States Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack:

12 I think it's important for us to figure out a way to get this thing
13 started so that we don't slip on the timeline that is important to
14 meet in order for us to meet the deadline set by Congress to get
15 (the final rule) in place within two years.

16 57. In further FOIA documents, the Agency acknowledged that failing to meet the
17 mandatory deadline would be detrimental, as it would lead to "further confusion." Additional
18 USDA documents repeatedly acknowledge the existence and importance of the mandatory 2018
19 deadline.

20 58. Despite USDA's continuous recognition of its statutory obligations to finalize
21 regulatory standards by the congressionally mandated deadline of July 29, 2018, USDA has not
22 done so.

23 **III. IMPACTS OF RULE WITHHOLDING ON PLAINTIFFS.**

24 59. Plaintiffs and their members are adversely affected by USDA's failure to issue the
25 rules by Congress's express deadline. Plaintiffs, organizationally, and through their hundreds of
26 thousands of members individually, have substantial interests in the government requiring the
27 disclosure of genetically engineered food by the deadline expressly established by Congress.

28 releases/2018/05/03/usda-seeks-comments-proposed-rule-national-bioengineered-food (last
visited July 31, 2018) (emphasis added).

1 60. USDA's unlawful withholding of the rules harms CFS's and CEH's
2 organizational interests. A critical part of both CFS's and CEH's missions is to ensure
3 transparency in the food system and informed consumer choice in the marketplace. The labeling
4 of GE food is an essential aspect of establishing such criteria. CFS has worked for many years
5 championing GE labeling through programmatic policy, campaign, legal, and legislative efforts.
6 This work has consumed hundreds of CFS staff hours over the course of many years. CEH has
7 also worked for years to secure transparency in the food system, including through the state-
8 based labeling initiative in California (Prop 37). USDA's indefinite delay of the rules harms
9 these interests.

10 61. USDA's unlawful withholding of the final GE food disclosure standard has also
11 injured Plaintiffs' members. This is particularly true when state laws that would have otherwise
12 provided those disclosures are preempted in the interim. Plaintiffs' members include consumers
13 who have strong interests in knowing whether the food they purchase has been genetically
14 engineered, and in having that information provided in clear on-package labeling. Plaintiffs'
15 members depend on clear food labeling to determine whether food is healthy and safe, as well as
16 produced in a manner that aligns with their values. Plaintiffs' members have waited for many
17 years, yet they still cannot rely on accessible food labeling to inform them of whether a particular
18 food has been genetically engineered or contains GE ingredients. This is the express harm that
19 Congress intended to redress by placing express deadlines in the statute, which USDA has now
20 flouted.

21 62. The relief sought in this action would redress Plaintiffs and their members by
22 enforcing the implementation of the mandated disclosure of GE foods, thereby ensuring
23 consumers are afforded free choice as well as the right to transparency and full disclosure in the
24 marketplace.

25 63. USDA's failure to establish a national mandatory GE food disclosure standard by
26 the July 29, 2018 deadline injures Plaintiffs and their members in these ways.

CAUSE OF ACTION

**VIOLATION OF THE APA AND GE LABELING ACT:
FAILURE TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL STANDARDS**

64. Plaintiffs re-allege, as if fully set forth, each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 63 of this Complaint.

65. The APA grants a right of judicial review to “a person suffering legal wrong because of agency action, or adversely affected or aggrieved by agency action.” 5 U.S.C. § 702.

66. The definition of “agency action” includes a “failure to act.” *Id.* § 551(13).

67. The APA states that a reviewing court “shall” interpret statutes and “shall compel agency action unlawfully withheld.” *Id.* § 706(1).

68. The GE Labeling Act requires USDA to establish a national GE food disclosure standard by the mandatory deadline of July 29, 2018. USDA’s failure to establish a national standard by July 29, 2018 is a direct violation of the GE Labeling Act and constitutes “unlawfully withheld” agency action within the meaning of the APA. *Id.* §§ 702, 706(1).

69. The actions and inactions of the Defendants described in this Cause of Action are causing injuries to the Plaintiffs, described above, for which they have no adequate remedy at law.

RELIEF REQUESTED

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request that this Court:

70. Enter an order declaring that USDA has violated the GE Labeling Act and the APA by failing to establish a national mandatory GE food disclosure standard by the July 29, 2018 deadline;

71. Order USDA to finalize and issue the regulations implementing the statute as soon as reasonably practicable, according to a Court-ordered timeline;

72. Retain jurisdiction of this action to ensure compliance with its decree;

73. Award Plaintiffs their fees, costs, expenses, and disbursements, including reasonable attorneys’ fees, associated with this litigation under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2412; and

1 74. Grant such further and additional relief as the Court deems just and proper.
2

3 Respectfully submitted this 1st day of August, 2018 in San Francisco, California.
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5 /s/ Adam Keats
6

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