

GMO Food Labeling & the Senate DARK Act

In 2014, Vermont became the first state to pass a standalone mandatory GMO labeling law, which will go into effect July 1, 2016. Connecticut and Maine have also passed GMO labeling laws that will go into effect once neighboring states pass similar laws. Over 30 states have introduced similar GMO labeling legislation in the past three years. In response to these state efforts, legislation developed by some food companies – dubbed the Deny Americans the Right to Know or DARK Act - was passed by the House of Representatives in July 2015. Similar legislation was recently proposed in the Senate in February.

The Senate version of the “Deny Americans the Right to Know” (DARK) Act would:

- Preempt states from requiring labeling of GMO foods.
- Strip FDA of its jurisdiction over GMO food disclosures.
- Make it harder for companies like Campbell’s Soup to voluntarily disclose the presence of GMOs.
- Make it the responsibility of USDA to promote biotechnology to consumers.
- Continue the current, broken voluntary labeling system.

Americans want the Right to Know:

- Polls show 90% of Americans support labeling of GMO food on food packages.
- 64 nations require labeling including Russia, China, the EU, and important trading partners in Asia.
- More than 1.4 million Americans have joined a petition urging FDA to require labeling of GMO food.
- Hundreds of food companies urged President Obama to honor his pledge to require GMO labeling.¹

Dispelling GMO Labeling Myths:

- **GMO labeling will not increase food prices.** Companies frequently change labels to highlight new innovations or to make new claims.
- **Voluntary labeling will not work.** Companies have been allowed to make voluntary non-GMO disclosures since 2001, but consumers are more confused than ever.
- **There is no “patchwork quilt.”** Current state GMO labeling laws are virtually identical, so there will be no “patchwork quilt” of different state laws. The responsible solution to concerns over a possible future patchwork would be the establishment of a uniform, national mandatory labeling standard.
- **GMO crops do not feed the world.** Conventional and GMO corn and soybean yields have increased at the same rate. What’s more, U.S. farmers produce only 4% of rice, wheat, fruits, and vegetables, and most US corn and soybeans are used for animal feed and ethanol, not food.²
- **GMO crops have increased herbicide applications.** Expanding the use of GMO crops has increased annual applications of glyphosate – a probable human carcinogen – from 16 million pounds to more than 280 million pounds.³
- **GMO crops have led to more toxic herbicides.** As weeds have become resistant to glyphosate, farmers have turned to more toxic weed killers linked to cancer, Parkinson’s disease and reproductive problems.

¹ http://static.ewg.org/pdf/2014-GE-Labeling-Letter-to-President-Obama.pdf?_ga=1.43874470.2058587466.1399901646

² <http://www.ewg.org/agmag/2014/10/little-ground-truth-world-food-day>

³ <http://www.enveurope.com/content/24/1/24>