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GM Foods: The U.S. Fights Mandatory Labeling in An Untested Human Experiment

Monday, June 30, 2008 by: Dr. Gregory Damato, Ph.D. (see all articles by this author)
| Key concepts: [labeling](#), [Africa](#) and [CODEX](#)

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(NaturalNews) The U.S. and several other nations recently attended a Codex meeting in Calgary, Canada to discuss food labeling. The Codex Alimentarius Commission implements the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program, the purpose of which is to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. The Codex Alimentarius (Latin, meaning Food Law or Code) is a collection of internationally adopted food standards presented in a uniform manner. One of the principle reasons for this forum was to discuss the necessity, or lack of necessity as the U.S. sees it, to set up mandatory [labeling](#) of GM (genetically modified) and GE (genetically engineered) foods for consumers. [South Africa](#) (SA) and many African countries are strong dissenting voices of the U.S. policy that all GM/GE foods are considered equal to non-GM/GE foods and are in fact deemed safe under a 1992 George H. W. Bush Executive Order.

Under this official policy, all GM/GE foods are not required to undergo any kind of safety testing before entering the market. Below you will find the exact policy of the FDA concerning [GM food](#): "FDA relies primarily on two sections of the Act to ensure the safety of foods and food ingredients. Generally, whole foods, such as fruits, [vegetables](#), and grains, are not subject to premarket approval. The primary legal tool that FDA has successfully used to ensure the safety of foods is the adulteration provisions of section 402(a)(1). The Act places a legal duty on developers to ensure that the foods they present to consumers are safe and comply with all legal requirements. FDA has authority to remove a food from the market if it poses a risk to public health. Foods derived from new plant varieties developed through [genetic engineering](#) will be regulated under this authority as well" [1].

Hence, nearly every modified food in the U.S. is completely untested for safety. This is very noteworthy for two reasons: (a) the U.S. leads the world in GM/GE foods (with up to 80% of its prepared and prepackaged foods being modified); and (b) every other nation besides the U.S. tests all GM/GE food before they are put into the food chain. Several African nations have dubbed GM/GE foods as "lethal" and believes the U.S. is fulfilling a population reduction strategy in [Africa](#).

During the CODEX meeting, SA, who has been demanding that Codex provide them with distinct and mandatory GM/GE labels, presented a 10-page document expressing this view. In this document the following critical points were made:



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1. Unmet Religious and Ethical Concerns of Christians and Jews

a. Corruption of Divine Protection

South Africa pointed out that in nearly every country there are various religious groups with differing beliefs when it comes to ingesting certain foods. South Africa stated that these "religious and ethical concerns must be noted and respected through global mandatory labeling of foods derived from genetic engineering and [biotechnology](#) must take into account ethical and religious concerns" [2] (CCFL, 2008, p. 1). For example, kosher Jews and Halal Muslims would wish to know whether the [corn](#) they were eating had been modified with a gene from pigs. Similarly, vegetarians would certainly wish to avoid vegetables which contained animal genes inserted into them and have an ethical right to know if this was the case.

B. Moral and Ethical Protection

SA contends that Codex and the WTO (World Trade Organization) assure protection of the moral, ethical and religious rights of Christian and Jewish believers. Therefore, mandatory labeling is essential to ensure these rights are preserved. If, for example, a Christian believed that God created the heaven and earth as well as all living creatures (including food), then a serious ethical concern would arise if he or she wanted to avoid such modified foods but had no realistic way to do so.

2. Unintended Consumer Health Effects

a. Psychological and Emotional Health

SA rightfully argued that the introduction of GM/GE foods violate the principles and mandates of Codex which are in place to protect the health of the consumer. In Norway, a report on GM/GE foods stated that, "some customers may experience strong ethical, religious, emotional or other objections for purchasing certain foods. These perceived risks may influence their health. These aspects of health should also be considered when the needs for new standards are discussed"[2]. Hence, the labeling of GM/GE foods should be mandatory under such an assumption.

B. Unknown Effects of Consumption of GM/GE Biotech Foods

Due to the lack of testing on GM/GE foods, safety is a significant concern for many individuals. These individuals may wish to avoid such food out of legitimate concern for their well-being. Antibiotic-resistant super diseases may be created if the [antibiotic](#) gene inserted into most GM foods would transfer into the consumer. Furthermore, some concerning results have been evinced from animals consuming GM/GE foods. GM DNA has been found in every organ (including fetuses) of animals eating these types of food. Additionally, numerous studies have shown many deleterious short and long-term effects from the consumption of GM/GE foods. For example, spermicide-containing corn, which was developed with funds from the USDA, and results in complete sterility in males has been rampant in the food chain for some time. Without proper labeling of these types of foods, there is no way to protect the fertility of males. Several other recent studies are detailed below:

* In 2005 and 2006, researchers at the Russian Academy of Sciences reported that female rats who were fed glyphosate-tolerant GM soya produced an excessive number of stunted pups with over 50% of them dying within three weeks. The other half were all sterile. This experiment was repeated several times with the same result [3].

* Between 2005 and 2006 in the Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh in India, thousands of sheep died while grazing on residues from Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*, which is a type of bacteria which is toxic to some types of insects) cotton [crops](#) [4].

* In 2003, villagers in the Philippines' south suffered mysterious illnesses when a [Monsanto](#) Bt maize hybrid came into flower. At least five have died and many villagers tested positive for antibodies to the Bt protein while others still remain chronically ill [5].

* Between 2001 and 2002, 12 [cows](#) died in Hesse, Germany after consuming Syngenta GM maize (Bt176), while many others had to be slaughtered due to mysterious illnesses [6].

* From 2002 to 2005, researchers from four Italian universities published articles indicating that GM soya adversely affected pancreatic, hepatic (liver) and testicular cells in young mice [5].

* In 2005, Australian researchers at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Canberra reported that a harmless protein in beans (alpha-amylase inhibitor-1) caused inflammation in the lungs of mice and elicited increased dietary sensitivities to other proteins when transferred to peas [7].

* In 1998, researchers reported damage to every organ system of young rats who were fed GM [potatoes](#) containing snowdrop lectin [8]. In the same year, researchers in Egypt found analogous effects on the guts of mice fed Bt potato [9].

* In 2002, Aventis, later named Cropscience, submitted research to regulators in the U.K. reporting that chicken fed glufosinate-tolerant GM maize Chardon LL were twice as likely to die prematurely than chickens in the control group [10].

C. Nutrient Non-Equivalence

SA contend that plants genetically modified may not be nutritionally equivalent, bio-available and can possibly

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possess toxic anti-nutrients [11]. There is no nutritional information for such foods, which raises the possibility that the modified nutrient could be toxic. Different and modified forms of nutrients may be present, which may make these foods unsafe. South Africa concluded that the risks from GM/GE food fall outside the realm of non-modified food and therefore, require strict labels.

D. Post Market Surveillance Impossible Without Labeling

Safety concerns are never over once food reaches consumers. For example, The National Institutes of Science in the U.S. reported in June of 2004 that workers processing GM celery contracted severe rashes, especially when exposed to direct sunlight. Labeling would allow handlers and consumers to become cognizant of potential risks involved with eating and processing such types of foods. Based on the principles of Codex, SA stated that it would be inconsistent and dangerous to adopt anything other than mandatory labeling of GM/GE foods. Furthermore, the absence of adequate labeling of GM/GE foods essentially equates to human experimentation without informed consent. According to Nuremberg Code,

"The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved... All inconveniences and hazards reasonably to be expected; and the effects upon his health or person, which may possibly come from his participation in the experiment" [12]. According to SA, mandatory labeling will allow implied informed consent, which will allow consumers to opt in and out of the experiment if they choose to do so.

After SA had submitted their highly researched rationale behind the mandatory labeling of GM/GE foods, the U.S. and its allies (e.g., Canada, Mexico, Argentina, [Australia](#), New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia) jumped all over them and stated that extensive research clearly supports that GM/GE foods are safe, therefore, no labeling is necessary. This is obviously not the case (as presented by SA) and delineates the inter-meshed interests and historical marriage between U.S. and large food [corporations](#) (i.e., Monsanto, who produces up to 90% of GM/GE seeds and foods). Following the overwhelming condemnation of SA's paper from the U.S. and the extra procedural requirements the U.S. pushed for because of these comments, the SA government had it subsequently withdrawn.

As a result of this development and the constant battles with the corporations of the U.S. and their biased agendas, SA called another meeting and declared they would circumvent Codex and create their own labeling system with or without their agreement. Countries like Swaziland, Kenya, Ghana, Egypt, Cameroon, Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa and several other African countries with [Japan](#), EU, Switzerland, Norway and many other countries stated their commitments to the mandatory labeling.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to eliminate all previous labeling documents and keep the door open for the future possibility of international labeling of GM/GE foods at a later date, which was strongly opposed by the U.S.

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About the author

Dr. Gregory Damato enjoys a vegan lifestyle while residing in Perth, Western Australia and runs a Quantum

Biofeedback clinic treating various clients ranging from autism to cancer. He is currently authoring a book for parents educating on the dangers of vaccines, chemical toxicity in toys, the effects of EMFs and EMRs and other hidden dangers and ways to combat rising childhood illness and neurological disease by naturally building immunity, detoxification, [nutrition](#) and energetic medicine. His website is: www.quantumenergywellness.com

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