



Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - North America

Whole Foods Market seeks non-GMO seal

By Caroline Scott-Thomas, 09-Jul-2009

Whole Foods Market has partnered with the Non-GMO Project to test for the presence of genetically modified (GM) ingredients in its private label products in order to independently verify them as GM-free.

Although the USDA requires that certified organic produce must also be GM-free, there is no government requirement for labeling of foods containing GM ingredients in the non-organic sector. And for some crops, it is becoming increasingly difficult for manufacturers to source non-GM versions. GM soy, for example – the most widely grown GM crop – now accounts for 90 percent of soy produced in the US.

Whole Foods Market has said it will use the Non-GMO Project's Product Verification Program (PVP), which uses a process combining on-site audits, genetic testing of ingredients and a document-based review to confirm that foods do not contain GM ingredients – and it is urging other parts of the food industry to do the same.

The company's quality standards coordinator and Non-GMO Project board member Joe Dickson said: *"As you can imagine, the level of diligence involved will require an enormous amount of effort at every step in the manufacturing process. The more participation we have in the program, the more rapidly the industry will realize efficiencies. Economies of scale will ultimately have a real and lasting impact on the available supply of non-GMO ingredients."*

Wider interest

The PVP has already caught the attention of some food manufacturers, which have sought to avoid using GM ingredients in their products on the back of consumer pressure. Although the move from Whole Foods makes it the largest brand to seek the project's verification, there are a number of other well-known companies that have products registered with the program, including SK Foods, Whole Soy & Co., Lundberg Family Farms and San J, among others.

It is anticipated that the project's non-GMO verification seal will start appearing on products from October this year.

Senior global vice president of purchasing at Whole Foods Market Michael Besancon said: *"Since there is no US regulation regarding disclosure on products manufactured with GMO ingredients, we are committed to helping our shoppers make confident choices by knowing that what they are buying has been verified as meeting the standards of the non-GMO Project."*

Whole Foods Market has also announced that it will hold an educational webinar on August 26 to provide industry with more information about the Non-GMO Project and PVP.

Information on the webinar can be found at www.wholefoodsmarket.com/nongmoproject .

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