Most Americans Believe GMO Foods Are Unsafe; They Need Labels to Avoid Them

By Ronnie Cummins

• The writer is addressing the question, "Should the Federal Drug Administration require special labeling of genetically modified foods?"

Health and food safety are hot button issues for millions of Americans—and rightly so.

Polls indicate alarm over the contamination of everyday foods by pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, synthetic additives and, especially, genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

A recent New York Times poll found that 93 percent of Americans want GMOs labeled, an action already required by 64 nations.

Two-thirds of Americans believe that GMOs are unsafe. Millions of consumers are switching over to non-GMO, organic foods, and as a result organics have moved from a niche market into a $40 billion powerhouse.

Indeed, Americans now spend more than 10 cents of every food dollar for items that are labeled "organic," "non-GMO" or "natural."

A series of highly publicized GMO labeling ballot initiatives in California, Washington and Oregon have fueled the fires of the "Frankenfoods" controversy—with Big Food and chemical companies spending vast sums to stop labeling.

Vermont, Maine and Connecticut have passed popular laws requiring labeling of GMOs. Eight counties in California, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii have banned GMO crops altogether.

Vermont’s mandatory GMO labeling law goes into effect in July 2016, causing near-panic among major food brands, who face the dilemma of either removing all GMO ingredients from their products—which is what happened in the European Union after GMO food labeling became mandatory in 1998—or else affixing what Monsanto has called a "skull and crossbones" GMO label on the front of their packages and bottles.

Eighty percent of supermarket foods now contain GMOs and the toxic chemicals sprayed on GMOs.

In March 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization declared Monsanto’s Roundup glyphosate herbicide a "probable carcinogen."

That prompted the banning of all GMO cultivation in several dozen nations, including Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Greece, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Russia and Denmark.

In the U.S., the glyphosate herbicide currently is sprayed heavily on 84 percent of all GMO crops, including corn, soybeans, canola, sugar beets, cotton, alfalfa, wheat, beans and rice.

In California, authorities announced that Monsanto’s glyphosate would be added to its list of cancer-causing chemicals requiring special monitoring and warning signs.

The EPA previously acknowledged that long-term exposure to glyphosate can cause kidney and reproductive damage. And a report by a senior researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last year connected glyphosate to damage to the human gut and digestive system, as well as hormone disruption, impaired liver detoxification and lowered nutrient absorption.

Meanwhile, with the rise of GMO-induced superweeds on the majority of U.S. farmland, the EPA, USDA and FDA have given the green light to a controversial new generation of GMO crops that can be sprayed with dicamba and other strong toxicides including 2,4-D—a component of Agent Orange.

Billions of pounds of glyphosate, atrazine, 2,4-D and other toxic pesticides are now being sprayed on our food,
accompanied by billions of pounds of highly polluting chemical fertilizers.

This GMO/chemical onslaught is destroying our health and contaminating our soils, surface waters and air. Meanwhile, the emissions from industrial farming have become major factors in global warming.

Americans want GMO labeling. Unfortunately Monsanto, Big Food and their minions in the U.S. Congress have decided that you, the consumer, have no right to know what's in your food.

In July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a highly unpopular law taking away states' and consumers' rights to require labels on GMO foods.

The law also makes it legal to fraudulently label GMO and chemical tainted foods as "natural." Now this bill, dubbed the DARK (Deny Americans the Right to Know) Act, goes to the Senate.

Americans can help stop passage of the DARK Act by picking up their cell phones and texting LabelGMO to 97779. Tell Congress you want mandatory labels on GMOs.

ABOUT THE WRITER

A leading global food activist, Ronnie Cummins is executive director of Organic Consumers Association, a non-profit, U.S. based network of 850,000 consumers, and the author of "Genetically Engineered Foods: A Self-Defense Guide for Consumers." Readers may write him at OCA, 6771 South Silver Hill Drive, Finland, MN 55603

This essay is available to Tribune News Service subscribers. Tribune did not subsidize the writing of this column; the opinions are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of Tribune or its editors.

Citation:

You can copy and paste this information into your own documents.

Cummins, Ronnie. "Most Americans Believe GMO Foods Are Unsafe; They Need Labels to..."  

Cummins, R. (2015, Oct 29). Most americans believe GMO foods are unsafe; they need labels to..  