

Genetically Engineered Foods: Consumers Have a Right to Know



The Ohio Ecological Food
and Farm Association

Genetic engineering (GE) refers to a set of technologies used to change the genetic makeup of cells to produce novel organisms that exhibit a desired trait, such as pesticide resistance. Since their 1996 market debut, GE foods, also referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), have become commonplace on supermarket shelves. GE foods are coming under increasing consumer scrutiny as more research emerges that raise health, societal, and environmental concerns. Yet public policy has failed to effectively regulate GE technology, or require labeling that protects a consumer's right to know.

How Consumers Can Avoid GE Foods

1. Buy Certified Organic

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program prohibits organic producers from using GE seed or animal feed. Organic farmers and processors undergo a rigorous annual certification process that verifies that their products are made without GE ingredients. To ensure a packaged product is certified organic, the name of the certifying agency must be displayed on the product label.

2. Avoid Non-Organic Processed Foods

Many of the GE ingredients consumed today are found in processed foods. The "Big Five" most common GE crops found in processed foods are corn, soybeans, canola, cottonseed, and sugar beets. These GE ingredients are often found in substitute meat and dairy products, frozen meals, canned foods, baking products, soft drinks, infant formulas and baby foods.

3. Read Labels With Care

Because GE labeling is not required, buying organic is the safest way to guarantee you are not eating GE food. However, there are many non-organic foods that are not genetically altered; it is just harder to identify them as GE free with absolute certainty. Check to see if any of the individual ingredients (particularly the "Big Five") are labeled organic or look for a "Non-GMO Project" label.

4. Shop Local, Know Your Farmer

Even when you're buying directly from the farmer at your local farmers' market or farm stand, you still need to ask questions about how your food was produced. Most farmers are happy to answer your questions. To find sustainable farmers and businesses near you, search OEFFA's *Good Earth Guide* at www.oeffa.org.

5. Buy rbGH-Free Dairy

The synthetic GE hormone, rbGH, used to boost milk production, has been linked to an increased risk of breast and prostate cancers. In 2011, as a result of public opposition, the Ohio Department of Agriculture rescinded a rule that prohibited labeling products rbGH free. Now consumers are able to make conscious decisions to purchase rbGH-free products in Ohio.

Take Action Today!

Demand That GE Food Be Labeled

1. Sign the Petition

You have the right to know what is in your food. Tell your elected officials they need to pass legislation requiring the labeling of GE foods sold in Ohio.

2. Host a Movie House Party

Invite friends, neighbors and family to watch a movie and discuss this issue. Visit the OEFFA website for hosting tips.

3. Contact Your Local Grocer

Consumers can influence corporate decisions to buy local and organic. Encourage your grocer to provide more GE-free food. Visit the OEFFA website for letter writing tips.

4. Stay Informed and Involved Through OEFFA

Together, we can make a difference! But, you need to act. OEFFA will update you on the latest developments and actions that you can take.

For resources and to join in, go to <http://policy.oeffa.org/gelabeling>



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