



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Cosponsor Genetically Engineered Food Legislation

June 25, 2003

Dear Colleague,

Please cosponsor the following 6 bills that together provide a complete regulatory structure to protect our food, environment, and health. These are common sense precautions to ensure genetically engineered or modified foods do no harm. Please contact Auke Mahar-Piersma at 5-5871 to cosponsor these bills.

Sincerely,

/S

Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress

/S

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/S

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

/S

Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress

Summary of Genetically Engineered Food Legislation

The Genetically Engineered Crop and Animal Farmer Protection Act of 2003

Agribusiness and biotech companies have consolidated market power at the same time as the average farmer's profits and viability have significantly declined. Policies promoted by biotech corporations have systematically acted to remove basic farmer rights. These policies include unreasonable seed contracts, the intrusion into everyday farm operations, and liability burdens. This bill provides several

farmer rights and protections to maintain the opportunity to farm:

- Farmers may save seeds and seek compensation for failed GE crops.
- Biotech companies may not: shift liability to farmers; nor require access to farmer's property; nor mandate arbitration; nor mandate court of jurisdiction; nor require damages beyond actual fees; or charge more to American farmers than they charge farmers in other nations.
- Seed companies must: ensure seeds labeled non-GE are accurate; provide clear instructions to reduce cross-pollination; and inform farmers of the risks of using GE crops.
- EPA is required to take action to prevent resistance to Bt, an important organic pesticide.
- The bill prohibits genetic engineering designed to produce sterile seeds.

The Genetically Engineered Organism Liability Act of 2003

Biotech companies are selling a technology that is being commercialized far in advance of the new science of genetic engineering. Farmers may suffer from crop failures. Neighboring farmers may suffer from cross-pollination, increased insect resistance, and unwanted "volunteer" GE plants. Therefore, biotech companies should be found liable for the failures of GE crops:

- The bill places all liability from negative impacts of GE organisms squarely upon the biotechnology companies that created the GE organism.
- Farmers are granted indemnification to protect them from the liabilities of GE crops.

The Genetically Engineered Food Safety Act of 2003

Given the consensus among the scientific community that genetic engineering can potentially introduce hazards, such as allergens or toxins, GE foods need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The possibility of such hazards dictates a cautious approach to GE food approvals. However, FDA has glossed over the food safety concerns of GE foods. This bill requires that all GE foods follow a strenuous food safety review process:

- Requires FDA to screen all GE foods through the current food additive process to ensure they are safe for human consumption including a public comment period of at least 30 days.
- Requires that unique concerns be explicitly examined in the review process, a phase out of antibiotic resistance markers, and a prohibition on known allergens.

The Genetically Engineered Food Right To Know Act of 2003

Consumers wish to know whether the food they purchase and consume is a GE food. Concerns include the potential transfer of allergens into food and other health risks, potential environmental risks associated with the genetic engineering of crops, and religiously and ethically based dietary restrictions. Adoption and implementation of mandatory labeling requirements for GE food produced in the United States would facilitate international trade. This bill acknowledges consumers have a right

to know what GE foods they are eating:

- Requires food companies to label all foods that contain GE material and requires the FDA to ensure compliance with testing. Voluntary, non-GE food labels are also permitted.
- A legal framework is established to ensure the accuracy of labeling without creating significant economic hardship on the food production system.

Real Solutions to World Hunger Act of 2003

The demand for mandatory labeling, safety testing, and farmer protections do not constitute obstacles to the cessation of world hunger. Economics remain the significant barrier to a consistent food supply, and the development of expensive GE crops may only exacerbate this trend. However, agroecological interventions have had significantly more success in helping developing nations feed themselves with higher yields and improved environmental practices, all within reasonable costs for developing countries.

- To protect developing nations, GE exports are restricted to those already approved in the U.S. and approved by the importing nation.
- The bill creates an international research fund for sustainable agriculture research paid for the Sustainable Agriculture Trust Fund, a small tax on biotechnology company profits.

The Genetically Engineered Pharmaceutical and Industrial Crop Safety Act

A pharmaceutical crop or industrial crop is a plant that has been genetically engineered to produce a medical or industrial product. The new products are for medical or industrial purposes only and are not intended for the food supply or released into the environment. However, experts acknowledge that contamination of our food is inevitable due to the inherent imprecision of biological and agricultural systems. Contamination by pharmaceutical crops and industrial crops pose substantial liability and economic risks to farmers, grain handlers, and food companies.

- The bill places a temporary moratorium on pharmaceutical crops and industrial crops until all regulations required in this bill are in effect.
- The bill places a permanent moratorium on pharmaceutical crops and industrial crops grown in an open-air environment and on pharmaceutical crops and industrial crops grown in a commonly used food source.
- The USDA shall establish a tracking system to regulate the growing, handling, transportation, and disposal of all pharmaceutical and industrial crops to prevent contamination.
- The National Academy of Sciences shall issue a report that explores alternative methods to produce pharmaceuticals or industrial chemicals that do not present the risk of contamination.