Genetically engineered foods / Whole Foods Market.

Contributors

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For More Information–

The following organizations offer a wide range of views on the merits of and concerns about agricultural biotechnology:

The Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology
http://www.pewagbiotech.org

The Organic Farming Research Foundation
http://www.ofrf.org

Union of Concerned Scientists
http://www.ucsusa.org/

Council for Biotechnology Information
http://www.whybiotech.com

To learn more about our private label products, visit our website: http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/list_privatelabel.html

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Whole Foods Market® Core Values

We sell the highest quality natural and organic products available.

We satisfy and delight our customers.

We care about Team Member happiness and excellence.

We create wealth through profit and growth.

We care about our communities and our environment.

(U.S. version)

WHOLE FOODS MARKET

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genetically engineered foods

WHOLE FOODS MARKET

Through our extensive selection of organically produced foods and through our company brands, Whole Foods Market provides options for consumers who prefer foods not originating from genetically engineered seed.

What is genetic engineering?

Genetic engineering, or biotechnology, is a set of scientific techniques used to change the genetic makeup of living cells, producing new organisms with traits unlike those found in nature or those created through traditional breeding techniques. Using genetic engineering, scientists can manipulate and insert genes from other species into plants, creating genetically engineered (GE) plants, also commonly known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Using these techniques, scientists have created plants with increased insect resistance, herbicide resistance, and changes in color, size, sturdiness and nutritional profile. As of 2004, genetically engineered corn, soy, flax, tomato, potato, rice, papaya, cotton, squash, canola, sweet potato and sugar beet seeds have been available to farmers in the United States to grow and sell for foods intended for human consumption. The plants most commonly genetically engineered are soy, cotton, corn, canola and papaya. Other commercially available genetically engineered seeds have yet to be widely adopted by farmers.

Genetic engineering of our food supply raises complex and difficult issues. Many scientists believe there is unlimited potential in agricultural biotechnology, citing the potential use of fewer pesticides, less hunger and more nutritionally targeted foods. However, other experts are equally concerned that a robust and accurate risk/benefit analysis remains challenging given the current inadequacies of the regulatory system governing genetically engineered microorganisms, plants and animals. They also emphasize the need for more in-depth, impartial research.

Adventitious Contamination

Since the first genetically engineered crops were planted, producers of non-GE crops have been finding trace amounts of genetically engineered material in their crops — an effect known as adventitious contamination. Today, U.S. crops can be exposed to some small levels of genetically engineered plant material, usually in the form of windborne pollen. Contamination can also occur during shipping, storing and processing.

Government Regulation

Regulation of genetically engineered crops is shared by three U.S. government agencies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has jurisdiction over field tests of new GE crops, the Environmental Protection Agency oversees crops engineered to contain pesticides, and the Food and Drug Administration is charged with food safety issues and product labeling.

The FDA maintains that GE foods are not substantively different from their non-GE counterparts and, therefore, does not require pre-market testing of new GE crops before they are allowed to be sold to farmers or consumers. Label identification of bioengineered food is not required unless the new product is different from its conventional counterpart in terms of nutritional value or allergen presence.

Many polls suggest that the vast majority of Americans would support pre-marketing testing of GE ingredients and mandatory labeling of foods that contain these ingredients or are developed through genetic engineering techniques. Currently, more than 40 countries other than the U.S., including the 25 European Union nations, require labeling of GE ingredients.

Why We Don't Label

Although some food companies have chosen to label their products as "GMO-free," Whole Foods Market believes labeling products in our stores would be misleading to our customers.

Due to adventitious contamination, there are very few foods in the U.S. today that are truly GE-free or "GMO-free" as some companies currently claim. Non-GE crops are subject to GE pollen carried by wind and insects, thus even crops grown from non-GE seed could test positive for some GE material.

The FDA has not issued mandatory labeling requirements for foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients or GE-testing standards which all manufacturers can consistently and universally use. Nor has the FDA finalized their draft guidance for voluntary labeling of products that do not contain GE ingredients. Accordingly, it would be extremely difficult for Whole Foods Market or any other retailer to provide customers accurate and meaningful information about the genetic engineering status of all products stocked.

Our Private Label Products

All of the Whole Foods Market branded products are made from ingredients not grown from genetically engineered seed. You will find our own line of products under the brand names 365 Everyday Value™, 365 Organic™, Whole Kids™ and the new Whole "category" brands, such as Whole Kitchen™ and Whole Treat™. We require all of the growers and producers for our product lines to document that their ingredients are not genetically engineered, and we verify these claims through independent, third party laboratory testing using state-of-the-art tests for genetically engineered DNA. As the United States has not yet developed testing standards regarding the detection of genetically engineered ingredients in foods, we test our private label products using the threshold standards as set by the European Union.

Our Company Brands

365 · 365 Organic · Whole Kids · Whole Kitchen · Whole Treat · Whole Fields · Whole Catch

And more...

Organic Products

Buying organic products throughout our stores is another way of choosing non-GE food. The USDA's National Organic Standards require that organic crops not be grown from genetically engineered seed or made with genetically engineered ingredients. Accordingly, organic products can make a process claim that the product is made without genetically engineered ingredients. However, as adventitious contamination can also affect organic crops, a "GE-free" or "GMO-free" content claim on organic products would be inappropriate.