



## Law & Industry Daily

# Federal Lawmakers Call for GMO Labeling

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 ·

WASHINGTON, March 14 (LID) – A bipartisan group of 55 members of Congress this week urged the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to require the labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods.

The 45 House members and 10 senators joined in supporting a legal petition filed last year by the nonpartisan Center for Food Safety (CFS) on behalf of the “Just Label It” campaign that foods with genetically modified (GM) ingredients be labeled accordingly.

Such a requirement would “protect consumer rights and prevent consumer deception” in the marketplace, said the letter led by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.).

“FDA’s regulatory regime for food labeling is inadequate and uses 19th century concepts to regulate 21st century food technologies,” reads the bicameral letter sent Tuesday to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg.

The members of Congress — and other proponents of a labeling requirement — say consumers have a right to know if a product is made from plants or animals that have had their genetic makeup scientifically altered.

“Absent labeling, Americans are unable to choose for themselves whether to purchase GE foods,” their letter reads.

The FDA is taking public comment on the CFS petition, which was filed in September 2011. A ruling is expected later this year.

The petition calls for labeling of food made with genetically engineered (GE) ingredients or ingredients from genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

A 1992 policy statement the FDA allowed GE foods to be marketed without labeling provided they were not “materially” different from other foods in such a way that could be recognized by taste, smell or other senses.

“The outdated standard has no legal basis in the statute and was adopted by FDA despite a lack of scientific studies or data to support the assumption that GE foods are not materially different from conventional foods,” CFS said in a statement.

CFS, a non-profit public interest organization, said the United States ought to join the nearly 50 countries that have a labeling mandate. Among the nations: the 15 countries of the European Union, Japan, Australia, Brazil, Russia and China.



Over 850,000 individuals and some 400 organizations have signed on to support the Just Label It petition.

CFS estimated that up to 85 percent of U.S. corn is genetically engineered as are 91 percent of soybeans and 88 percent of cotton.

A copy of the letter from members of Congress is available at

<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Final-Signed-GE-Labeling-Letter.pdf>.