

LABELLING GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mandatory labelling of genetically modified (GM) foods is necessary to provide transparency for Canadians.

The vast majority of Canadians want GM foods labeled.

Twenty years of polling in Canada consistently shows that over 75% of Canadians want mandatory labelling of GM foods. This includes a 2016 survey commissioned by Health Canada (78%)ⁱ and a 2015 Ipsos Reid poll commissioned by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (88%).ⁱⁱ

With mandatory labelling, Canadians would know which GM foods are on the market.

The Canadian government does not track which GM traits, crops, and animals are on the market. Without mandatory labelling, Canadians do not know what GM foods are on the market.

Mandatory labelling would give Canadians access to an informed choice.

There are many possible reasons why consumers may want to avoid purchasing genetically modified foods. 30% of Canadians who said they wanted mandatory labelling cited ethical concerns and 87% said they just want to know what is in the food they are eating.ⁱⁱⁱ

Voluntary labelling of GM foods has failed.

To our knowledge, no companies have voluntarily labelled GM foods using the standard published in Canada in 2004.

There are precedents for the federal government to label foods for non-health-related reasons.

In Canada, there is mandatory labelling of all irradiated foods and there are mandatory requirements for all prepackaged food products to indicate country of origin on labels.



Mandatory labelling is one necessary tool in a larger traceability and monitoring system for GM products.

There is no post-market monitoring which means that, for example, the statement that there is no evidence of harmful health effects of eating GM foods is not a science-based statement because there is no means to gather such evidence or the lack thereof.

64 countries have mandatory GM food labelling.

Canada and the US are the only developed countries that do not have some form of mandatory labelling for GM foods. Countries that have mandatory GM food labelling include the countries of the European Union, as well as Japan, Australia, Brazil, Russia and China.

CONSUMER POLLS

For 20 years, polls have shown that, consistently, over 75% of Canadians want mandatory labelling of GM foods. (www.cban.ca/labellingpolls)

The Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network in August 2015 showed a high level of awareness and concern about genetically modified foods among Canadians:

71% of Canadians say they are aware about GM foods.

88% of Canadians want mandatory labelling of GM foods.

Six in ten (59%) of Canadians oppose genetically modifying crops and animals to produce food, and one in three (34%) say they support it.

48% support a ban on all genetically modified food.

Of Canadians who want GM foods labeled:

87% just want to know what is in the food they are eating,

55% are concerned about safety,

47% are concerned about government transparency in regulation,

46% are concerned about corporate control,

46% think GM is not natural,

45% have environmental concerns,

30% have ethical concerns,

58% are concerned that not enough research has been done on the long-term health and environmental impacts.

Six in ten (57%) of Canadians are not confident in the government's safety and regulatory systems for genetically modified foods.

REFERENCES CITED:

- i The Strategic Counsel, Report on Consumer Views on Genetically Modified Foods, June 24, 2016.
- ii Ipsos Reid, commissioned by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, September 2015. www.cban.ca/2015poll
- iii Ipsos Reid, commissioned by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, September 2015. www.cban.ca/2015poll

For more information and details: www.cban.ca/labelling

Provided by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN)



cban.ca

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) brings together 16 organizations to research, monitor and raise awareness about issues relating to genetic engineering in food and farming. CBAN members include farmer associations, environmental and social justice organizations, and regional coalitions of grassroots groups. CBAN is a project on Tides Canada's shared platform. www.cban.ca