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**Contact Info**

**Headquarters**  
Sustainable Food News  
P.O. Box 7692  
Portland, ME 04112

**Publisher**  
Dan McGovern  
office: 207.749.5249  
fax: 207.699.1380  
[email](#)

**Sales**  
office: 207.749.5249  
fax: 207.699.1380  
[email](#)



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## Federal bill to require labeling of GE foods

*Sen. Boxer, Rep. DeFazio introduce legislation supported by 90% of Americans*

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legislation in the previous Congress, would give consumers, who are used to reading labels to see if foods contain MSG, trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or aspartame, more information.

"Americans have the right to know what is in the food they eat so they can make the best choices for their families," Sen. Boxer said. "This legislation is supported by a broad coalition of consumer groups, businesses, farmers, fishermen and parents who all agree that consumers deserve more – not less – information about the food they buy."

Sen. Boxer, Rep. DeFazio and 54 Senate and House lawmakers wrote a letter last year urging the FDA to require the labeling of GE foods. More than one and a half million Americans have filed comments with the FDA also urging the agency to label GE foods.

The bipartisan legislation would require clear labels for genetically engineered whole foods and processed foods, including fish and seafood. The measure would direct the FDA to write new labeling standards that are consistent with U.S. labeling standards and international standards.

According to surveys, more than 90 percent of Americans support the labeling of genetically engineered foods. In fact, many consumers are surprised to learn that GE foods are not already labeled, Sen. Boxer said in a statement.

Currently, the FDA requires the labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives and processes, but the agency has resisted labels for genetically modified foods. In a 1992 policy statement, the FDA allowed GE foods to be marketed without labeling, claiming that these foods were not "materially" different from other foods because the genetic differences could not be recognized by taste, smell or other senses.

"Unfortunately, the FDA's antiquated labeling policy has not kept pace with 21st century food technologies that allow for a wide array of genetic and molecular changes to food that can't be detected by human senses," Boxer said in a statement. "Common sense would indicate that GE corn that produces its own insecticide – or is engineered to survive being doused by herbicides – is materially different from traditional corn that does not. Even the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has recognized that these foods are materially different and novel for patent purposes."

Sixty-four countries around the world already require the labeling of GE foods, including all the member nations of the European Union, Russia, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand.

Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Mark Begich (D-AK), Jon Tester (D-MT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) are cosponsors of the Senate bill. Representatives Jared Polis (D-CO), Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Donna Christensen (D-Virgin Islands), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Peter Welch (D-VT),

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) Wednesday introduced legislation to require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to clearly label genetically engineered (GE) foods so consumers can make informed choices about what they eat.

The Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act, a reintroduction of similar legislation in the previous Congress, would give consumers, who are used to reading labels to see if foods contain MSG, trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or aspartame, more information.

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When American families purchase food, they deserve to know if that food was genetically engineered in a laboratory,” Representative DeFazio said. “This legislation is supported by consumer’s rights advocates, family farms, environmental organizations, and businesses, and it allows consumers to make an informed choice.”

“American consumers have made it clear that they want to be empowered to make choices about the food they eat. This legislation will deliver the transparency every American deserves by providing clear labeling standards for food containing genetically engineered ingredients,” said Senator Gillibrand.

“This is a common sense approach to ensuring that American consumers know more and make more informed decisions about the foods they eat,” Senator Blumenthal said. “As an advocate for consumers’ rights and ally of many groups supporting this measure, I want to make sure the food industry gives consumers the full story about what they put on their dinner tables. Consumers deserve to have clear, consistent, and accurate facts about the food products they purchase. More information is always better than less.”

“Alaskans deserve to know what’s on their dinner plate, especially if it might come from a science lab. Labeling Genetically Engineered food should be a no-brainer which is why I’m pleased to join my colleagues on this bill to make sure consumers are fully informed when they make choices at the grocery store,” said Senator Begich.

“American families shouldn’t have to play a guessing game when it comes to the food they put on their kitchen tables,” Senator Tester said. “Consumers have a right to know what’s in their food, and this bill gives them the tools they need to make informed decisions about the foods they choose.”

“All over this country people are becoming more conscious about the foods they are eating and the foods they are serving to their kids. This is certainly true for genetically engineered foods,” Senator Sanders said. “I believe that when a mother goes to the store and buys food for her child she has the right to know what she is feeding her child.”

“Oregonians want to know what is in their food, and they should have the right to find out,” said Senator Merkley. “Labeling is the common sense way to bring more transparency to consumers.”