

Oct 18, 2001

Mirian Gaucher
Team Leader

CGSB Draft Standard for Voluntary Claims About Foods That Are and Are Not [Products of Gene Technology]

Dear Mrs. Gaucher,

Please find attached a submission endorsed by 35 groups representing the concerns of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. Please note that the views expressed are those of the endorsing organizations. The CEN itself is apolitical, and functions as a non-advocacy network. In this capacity the CEN has agreed to collect the signatures, and submit them to CGSB on behalf of the signatories. The CEN has not endorsed this position, and this delivery is not to be listed as a CEN submission on the file. The endorsing organizations have explicitly requested they be counted as individual submissions sharing a common position (i.e.: 35 submissions).

Further to our conversation this am, you will no doubt notice that among the concerns listed, the voluntary nature of the Draft Standard has been identified as a major concern. Recognizing the CGSB has been mandated to consider only voluntary initiatives, it should be noted in the final report on submissions, that grave concern for the voluntary parameters of the mandate has been identified in at very least, these 35 submissions.

If for some reason your office requires the individual correspondence endorsing this position paper, kindly let me know and I will forward these to you post haste.

With Kindest Regards,

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To : The Canadian General Standards Board c/o Marian Gaucher

Cc : All Members of Parliament, House of Commons

Canadians demand a strong, legislated, mandatory labelling standard for foods derived through Genetic Engineering

Numerous polls have consistently shown that Canadians (over 90%) want food that is produced through genetic engineering (GE) to be labelled. In the face of food companies' refusal to provide this information on a voluntary basis in Canada, a strong, legislated, mandatory labelling standard is required.

Ignoring the wishes of Canadians, the government through the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) struck a committee under questionable circumstances that favours the food biotech industry. An issue that the committee itself acknowledges is a problem. Not surprisingly, the CGSB committee has produced a proposal for a weak, voluntary labelling scheme - amid confusion, lack of consensus and nearly two years of debate.

We, the undersigned, representing hundreds of thousands of Canadians, are writing to demand that the "Draft Standard for

Voluntary Claims About Foods That Are and Are Not [Products of Gene Technology]" be rejected. We ask that this submission be counted individually for each of the signatories (i.e., 35 individual submissions on the proposed voluntary labelling standard).

Some of the numerous flaws with the proposed voluntary labelling standard produced by the CGSB and the flawed process that produced it are enumerated briefly below:

1. In spite of the appearance of balanced requirements in the standard for positive ("product of") and negative ("not a product of") labelling, it is obvious that the industry intends to place the 'burden of proof' for labelling on non-GE foods. There is no reason to believe that

companies producing food derived through genetic engineering who currently refuse to voluntarily label their products will change that practice under a voluntary labelling scheme they can opt out of. Strong, mandatory labelling legislation must be established that requires food companies to provide consumers with the necessary information that, if they so choose, will help them to eliminate GMOs from their food and, in turn, from the environment.

2. The voluntary standard uses a term – "gene technology"– which is not used anywhere else in the world. This language is simply confusing. It should be called what it is and what consumers are familiar with: genetically engineered food.

3. The "at least 5%" tolerance in the standard for GE contamination in foods, including those labelled non-GE, is totally unacceptable. It runs contrary to global trends, including the majority of Canada's trading partners, and suggests that the biotech industry intends to continue to contaminate our food system with their GE products.

4. Erroneously the standard exempts key products used in food production from any GE labelling requirements (i.e., livestock feeds, veterinary biologicals and processing aids).

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Oct 11, 2001
Hello everyone,

As you know, the vote for Bill C-287, a bill calling for the mandatory labelling of genetically engineered (GE) foods is coming shortly.

You may also have heard that Minister of Health, Alan Rock, recently stated that he supported the bill but that many of his fellow Cabinet members are not on side with him and with us.

The last hour of debate before the 2nd reading and vote for Bill C-287 is expected to take place on October 16th at 5:30pm EST. The actual vote may be delayed for a few days but the debate will take place on that day.

It is therefore very important that we contact our MPs, whether by phone, emails, or fax as

soon as possible. There is no such thing as overkill right now. If you've already contacted your MP, please do it again. Parliament must understand that should they vote against C-287 next week, they will do so expressly against the will of the people.

You can log onto the Council of Canadians' website and click onto the "fax your MP" link where a ready made letter (which you can change) will automatically be faxed to your MP once you've entered pertinent information.

The pressure we've been able to exert onto the government has forced Mr. Rock to publicly endorse mandatory labelling. We must exert the same kind of pressure onto Parliament to do the same.

Thanks for your help.