



# Facts and Fiction about GMO Labeling

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Chemical manufacturers, Big Agriculture and junk food companies spent more than **\$70 million dollars spreading misinformation** to narrowly defeat GMO food labeling ballot initiatives in California and Washington [1]. They are now using the same old arguments as they campaign to defeat state GMO labeling laws in 30 states, including in Massachusetts. The following is a list of talking points employed by labeling opponents in Massachusetts, accompanied by our analysis and rebuttals.

***Myth: GMO labeling can only be handled at the Federal Level***

**Truth:** . This is a common industry response when they are trying to avoid meaningful legislation. Like most reforms, we won't get a federal law passed until it has passed in a number of states first. The **states are setting the standard** for a strong and meaningful GMO labeling law. Additionally, the current federal government is now paralyzed by partisan gridlock, and with 30 new GMO crops in the pipeline [2], we can't afford to wait.

***Myth: There is widespread consensus on GMO safety***

**Truth:** Worldwide, nearly 300 scientists and doctors, including the developer of the first commercialized GM crop, have signed on to a recent statement citing serious safety concerns with GMOs, stating that "claims that scientific and governmental bodies endorse GMO safety are exaggerated or inaccurate [3]." The U.S. federal government has **never performed or required any safety testing of GMO foods** [4]. The industry funds its own research to prove GMOs are safe while aggressively discrediting any independent research challenging that belief. GMO foods have been linked to digestive disorders, infertility, immune problems and cancer, and these studies warrant further research [5].

***Myth: People have been eating GMOs for nearly 20 years with no ill effect***

**Truth:** **There is absolutely no data to back this up.** GMO consumption might be causing acute or chronic effects, but without labeling and tracking, scientists and public health officials are unable to recognize linkages between GMO food intake and the many unexplained health problems facing Americans today. Further, we've been eating GMOs for less than a generation. Animal feeding studies have shown infertility problems manifest after several generations of eating GMOs [6].

***Myth: The World Health Organization, American Medical Association, National Academy of Sciences and other respected health organizations all conclude that GMOs are safe.***

***Truth:*** When people say this what they fail to mention is that these same groups have called for mandatory pre-market safety testing of genetically engineered foods, a standard the U.S. fails to meet [7]. A **National Academy of Sciences** report states that products of genetic engineering technology “carry the potential for introducing unintended compositional changes that may have adverse effects on human health [8].” Numerous public health and medical groups support the labeling of GMO foods, including the **American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association, and the Union of Concerned Scientists** [9].

***Myth: Labeling genetically engineered foods will increase food costs.***

***Truth:*** The recent Cornell study, which concludes that GMO labeling will dramatically increase food costs, was funded by the Council for Biotechnology Information, whose members consist of the major global biotechnology companies. We don't need to look at hypothetical projections based on faulty assumptions (thoroughly debunked by Consumers Union [10]): **dozens of other countries have already instituted GMO labeling without increasing food costs.**

***Myth: If people want to avoid GMOs, all they need to do is buy certified organic products.***

***Truth:*** All consumers deserve to know what they are eating – not just those who have access to organic food. Additionally, in an effort to confuse consumers seeking healthy foods, some food companies routinely and **intentionally mislead consumers** by labeling products with questionable ingredients as “natural”. The FDA does not prohibit the use of the word “natural” on products containing GMOs, and according to polls, 61 percent of respondents erroneously believed that the use of the word “natural” implies or suggests the absence of GMOs [11].

***Myth: GMOs are "substantially equivalent" to regular foods and so GMO labeling provides no useful information, or: "People don't need to know."***

***Truth:*** This is simply wrong. According to a New York Times poll found that more than 90% of people want GMO labeling.

GMOs are unique enough to warrant a patent, and multiple peer-reviewed studies show that **there are, in fact, material differences** between GMO and non-GMO crops, including herbicide residues and changes in the nutritional profile [12].

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