

July 17, 2017

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Submitted via GMOLabeling@ams.usda.gov.

**Comments of
Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA)
to the
United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service on
Proposed Rule GMO Questions Under Consideration**

Submitted by
Jim Gerritsen, President

Dear USDA,

Thank you for this opportunity for OSGATA to express our position regarding implementation of the labeling of “bioengineered” or genetically-engineered (GE) food. OSGATA is the national, farmer-run membership trade organization dedicated to developing and protecting the organic seed trade and the organic community.

- 1. Implementation Without Delay.** Implementation of this federal preemption law *must* be on a timely basis and without delay. After all, existing State GMO Labeling laws - already on the books - were beginning to take effect at the time of passage of this law last year. Polls consistently report 90% of consumers want GMO Labeling and they want that GMO Labeling *now*. If USDA is incapable of meeting the Congressional mandate in a timely fashion, they *must* notify Congress of their inability and urge Congressional repeal of the federal preemption. Such repeal would allow States to continue without further interruption their successful implementation of GMO Labeling laws passed already at the State level.
- 2. Honesty in GMO Labeling.** *All* ingredients in a product which are the result of genetic engineering *must* be labeled. This includes *all* genetically-engineered highly-refined sugars and oils. It is of no consequence whether current technology is capable of measuring GE content or not: if an ingredient is derived from a GE plant, it is without question GE. Therefore it *must* be labeled as such.
- 3. Definition of Bioengineering.** The labeling of “bioengineered” or GE ingredients *must* utilize the broadest possible definition of an engineering process occurring at a sub-cellular level. This *must* include *all* GE techniques, including CRISPR and RNAi and any others which come

along in the future. USDA AMS would be wise to adopt the thorough definition of genetic engineering adopted unanimously by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in their November 2016 meeting in St. Louis.

4. **Adopt 0.9% Threshold.** USDA *must* adopt the definition of 0.9% GE content as the threshold for individual ingredients to require GE labeling. This exact threshold amount of 0.9% is used in the European Union. It has become virtually universal worldwide in usage and adoption of this level will facilitate trade.
5. **On-Package-Labeling Essential.** Packages of food which contain GE ingredients above the established GE threshold *must* maintain transparency for consumers and therefore *must* display clear, legible and prominent *on-package labeling*.
6. **QR Code “Labeling” Unacceptable.** As a waning, questionable technology which lacks popular usage by the vast majority of consumers, “QR Codes” and other electronic designs which deny *instant on-package* product transparency to consumers are completely *illegitimate*. Such technology *must* not be considered acceptable for the purposes of GE labeling. Two additional and powerful, overriding considerations against the use of such technology are 1) the intolerable discrimination against low-income, elder and rural citizens who are not able to use this technology, and 2) the ability of food manufacturers to extract personal information from consumers without their authorization or knowledge.
7. **Include All Manufacturers.** In order for this GMO Labeling system to generate credibility and effectiveness among consumers, it is imperative that virtually all food manufacturers must be included in the system requiring labeling. There should be very few exceptions.
8. **Include Dietary Supplements.** Dietary supplements *must* be included and required to meet the GMO labeling system.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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