

Genetically modified food labeling will be back under legislative focus in the U.S., this time with bipartisan support and on the federal level. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) introduced legislation to the U.S. Congress Wednesday that would require the Food and Drug Administration to label genetically modified foods.

The so-called "Genetically Engineered Food Right-To-Know Act" would require labeling for genetically modified whole foods and processed foods. It comes after California's Proposition 37 failed to pass similar requirements last year. Boxer also failed to pass a different federal GMO bill back in 2000.



Photo: The Ecologist

The act is the first GMO legislation to be introduced with bicameral and bipartisan support, the *Huffington Post* reported.

The House bill has 22 cosponsors, all Democrats except for Republican Don Young of Alaska. The Senate bill has nine cosponsors, including Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

DeFazio explained to the post that although he has not formed a personal stance against GMOs, the idea of the bill is to allow consumers to make informed decisions.

"Even the most ardent free market advocate, someone who's a devout follower of Adam Smith, would have to admit that consumers aren't being given full information right now," DeFazio told the *Huffington Post*.

"Depriving them of the knowledge of whether or not this food has GMOs does not support a free market."

In the official press statement for the legislation, Boxer reflected on the same sentiment.

"Americans have the right to know what is in the food they eat so they can make the best choices for their families," 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."

The statement went on to add that the FDA currently requires labeling for over 3,000 ingredients, additives and processes, with the exception of genetically modified foods. It called the FDA's currently labeling policy "antiquated" and said it "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."

According to the release, 90% of Americans support labeling for genetically engineered foods.

In contrast with California's Proposition 37, the bill would include all foods under FDA regulation and would not provide exemptions for products such as beef and dairy, the *San Francisco Chronicle* explained.

Photo: Genetically modified corn by Keith Weller, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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