

Good evening. My name is Peter McKnight. I live at 59 Robin Lane in Fairfield. I'm a registered dietitian and I'm the co-chair of the GMO committee for Connecticut Sierra Club.

While genetically engineered foods appeared to have great promise when they were first developed, none of the promises of increased yields, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or other benefit have panned out. Instead we find ourselves consuming foods grown with historically unheard of levels of herbicides, and are faced with the prospect of foods developed with genes from other species, creating potential allergic reactions in those who are sensitive.

In addition to the environmental risks associated with GMOs such as the creation of herbicide-resistant "superweeds", we are also faced with human health consequences. For example, research has found that an "inert" ingredient in an herbicide usually paired with GMO crops can kill human embryonic, placental, and umbilical cord cells. In one study, scientists found that inert ingredients in the herbicide amplified the toxic effect on human cells—even at concentrations much more diluted than those used on farms and lawns. One specific inert ingredient, POEA, was more deadly to human embryonic, placental and umbilical cord cells than the herbicide itself – a finding the researchers called "astonishing." "Moreover, the proprietary mixtures available on the market could cause cell damage and even death [at the] residual levels" found on herbicide-treated crops, such as soybeans, alfalfa and corn, or lawns and gardens. The research team suspects that this popular herbicide might cause pregnancy problems by interfering with hormone production, possibly leading to abnormal fetal development, low birth weights or miscarriages. Health consequences definitely need more study. But these have been difficult as the companies holding the patents on the seeds have not been willing to release them for research purposes.

In summary, I urge your support of Food labeling for GMOs because:

- Consumers have a right to know what's in their food, especially concerning products for which health and environmental concerns have been raised, so they can make informed decisions about buying food for their families.
- Mandatory labeling will allow those consumers with specific allergies or intolerances to identify and steer clear of food products that cause them problems.
- Surveys indicate that a majority of Americans support mandatory labeling.
- Over 60 countries have established either mandatory GMO labeling or outright bans.

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References:

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