

GMO FOODS

You may have noticed some new labeling on certain foods lately, “Non-GMO”. There is no law requiring manufacturers to label foods as GMO or Non-GMO as of yet. So, why do certain manufacturers find it important to inform the consumer of this? Does it or should it even matter to us? What is GMO anyway?

GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism. The organism may be a plant (food), animal, fungus, bacteria, virus, or other organism. The first genetically engineered organisms were bacteria in the 1970’s.

Genetically modified foods (plants) are of great concern to many today. To be a GMO food means the genes of the plant have been altered from their original state by scientists. When those genes are manipulated scientists will add certain chemical genes or in some cases extra nutrients in order to create an enhanced or changed food. Since the goal of scientists is to create a larger and heartier crop that is resistant to pests and diseases, molecular biologists isolate the genes responsible for the insecticide activity they are seeking and those will become the candidate for use in a GMO plant.

Scientists can also transfer the genes that confer drought resistance, allowing crops to grow in drought conditions. They can also take away enzymes to reduce bruising and spots on foods.

Are all foods being genetically modified? No. There are certain foods that are dominantly GMO. These are corn, soy, sugar beets, zucchini, summer squash, canola and ranger russet potatoes. A huge majority of the GMO corn grown is used to feed animals being grown for consumption. So, if you wish to be GMO free, you would need to buy organically grown - both for produce and meat (grass fed, organic). Or, look for “Non-GMO” on the label. ♦

