

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

HB92

"GMO Labeling"

Sponsor Statement

This bill would require labeling of genetically modified food products sold in Alaska. Genetically modified organisms are plants or animals modified to include the genetic material from a non-related species. For example, Atlantic salmon can be modified with ocean pout and Chinook salmon genes to enlarge the species' natural size and speed up the growth pattern. Alaskans across the state have already vocally opposed GM salmon, dubbed Frankenfish. Other examples include apples being genetically modified to slow browning, with no beneficial health impacts, and corn crops modified with *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacteria to resist herbicides and pesticides. We need to know more about other food products that we purchase, eat, and feed to our families.

Alaskans hold a fundamental belief that they have a right to know what is in their food. Second, many residents have environmental concerns about GM crops, such as increased pesticide use and pesticide resistant weeds. Third, Alaskans recognize the risks of losing genetic diversity in food crops. Finally, Alaskans recognize potential health concerns associated with consumption of GMO food products. While more research needs to be done on health issues, the loss of crop diversity and increased pesticide usage are well documented and cause for concern. Yet, almost all U.S. grown corn, soy, sugar beets, and canola are genetically modified and included as ingredients in our everyday foods without our knowledge or consent.

There is a growing global movement to demand labeling GMOs and allow consumers the opportunity to choose whether they want to consume GM products. The United States and Canada are the only two industrialized nations that do not require labeling. Within the U.S., a number of Northeast states, such as Connecticut and Maine, have already signed legislation

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regarding GMO labeling requirements. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not require GMO safety studies and in fact overrode concerns expressed by FDA scientists.

I ask for your consideration and support for GMO Labeling so that Alaskans can be fully informed about their food supply and make informed choices respectively.