

BY KELSEY BLACKWELL & ELISA BOSLEY



PUZZLING plates

WHY ARE WE MORE
ALLERGIC TO OUR FOOD?

Before you plan your child's birthday party, do you ask whether any of the guests have a food allergy? That query is a modern must with good reason: One in 17 children now has some form of food reaction, says Robyn O'Brien, founder of the AllergyKids Foundation and author of *The Unhealthy Truth* (Harmony, 2009). An eye-popping statistic: Hospitalizations for severe food reactions rose sevenfold in just the past ten years, according to the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

It's not just kids, either. Although the number of adults living with food sensitivities is not currently tracked, "practically everyone has some kind of food issue," says Charles Cantano, MD, gastroenterologist and chief of medicine at Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis, MD. Gluten alone affects an estimated 18 million Americans, and untold more people react to soy, nuts, dairy, and other common allergens. The question is: Why? Here are three possible answers. ••

Too cautious?

For years, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended that when introducing solid foods to babies, parents avoid the “big eight” allergens—milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat—for at least the first year. After that, the AAP suggested, parents should introduce these foods one at a time, paying close attention for any adverse reactions.

But in 2008, having tracked more than a decade of rising reactions in kids, the AAP did a U-turn, advising parents to introduce allergenic foods as early as 5 months. Most recently, a 2013 paper in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* states that starting allergenic foods at 4 to 6 months *reduces* the risk of developing a food allergy. Consult your physician for guidance.

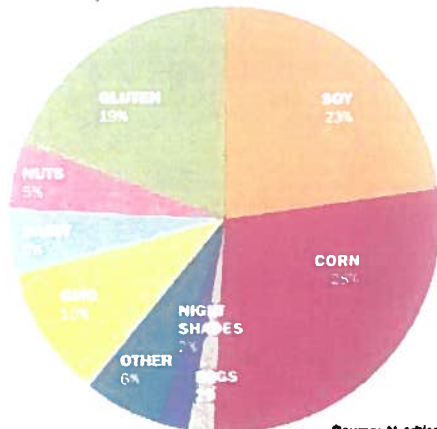
Too clean?

The most research-backed theory to explain the food-allergies increase is the hygiene hypothesis, proposed in 1989. It asserts that our lifestyle has become too sanitized and that because we’re not exposing young children to enough germs, their immune systems aren’t trained to tell the difference between harmless and harmful agents. “This really holds up when you look around the world and see that allergies are very uncommon in underdeveloped countries,” says Robert Wood, MD, chief of pediatric allergy and immunology at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center in Baltimore.

Corrupted food supply?

Other experts argue that the food itself is a concern. “If you’re going to address the issue from this Pirell angle, you must also look at how foods are produced,” O’Brien says. “The fact is we’re pouring chlorine on

What allergenic food do you believe will be the next big concern?



Source: *Nutrition Business Journal*

the animals we eat. What is that doing to our immune systems? We just don’t know.”

Another unknown: genetically modified (GM) foods, which have been artificially injected with bacteria, viruses, and genes to promote specific traits, such as resistance to pests and herbicides. Because these foods are so pervasive, it’s practically impossible to conduct human trials on their effects. Although European animal studies have linked eating GM foods to allergenicity, this research has largely been dismissed in the United States because of concerns about study design, reporting, or analysis.

Still, it’s hard to ignore the fact that the dramatic increase in food allergies, which began in the 1990s, coincides with commercial GM-crop introduction in 1996. “Are we allergic to the food, or are we allergic to what we’ve done to it?” O’Brien asks. The most common GM crops—corn, soy, canola, and sugar beets—are found in most packaged foods. And despite growing public awareness, GM ingredients remain unlabeled in the United States.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Elimination diet. If you suspect you or your child may have a food allergy, try an allergen food-free diet for at least two weeks and track differences in symptoms or mood. To learn how, go to deliciousliving.com and search for “elimination diet.”

Buy organic. By definition, USDA Organic-certified foods are free of GMOs. Also look for products bearing the Non-GMO Project Verified label.

Consider vitamin D. Although most data is preliminary, a 2013 study of 5,276 1-year-olds established an association between vitamin D insufficiency and food allergies. If you and your kids get limited sun exposure, ask your doctor about taking vitamin D supplements.

The proof is in the results.



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the organic movement

THE 2014 FORECAST LOOKS HEALTHY!

97

The percentage of organic-buying families who bought organic fruits and veggies in the previous six months

Here are some facts and figures for you to chew on about the state of the organic movement and where it's headed as we welcome 2014:



3

The number of trade agreements the US has with other countries and regions—Canada, the European Union (EU), and Japan—to facilitate the exchange of organic products between their health-conscious consumers.

Total sales of organic products in the US projected for 2015 (up from \$57.5 billion in 2010).

\$104.7 billion

162

The number of countries practicing organic farming.

The percentage of organic-buying families who purchased organic breads, grains, dairy, or packaged foods in the preceding six months.

85+

81

The percentage of US families who buy organic at least sometimes.

SELECTED SOURCES: "10 Top Trends in 2013 in the Natural and Organic Space," Strategic Research Group, www.srg.com, 2013; "Growth Patterns in the US Organic Industry," United States Department of Agriculture, www.usda.gov, 10/24/13; "New Study Examines Local, Organic Food Trends" by Lee Munnery, *From Field to Fork*, <http://radioforpma.com>, 8/5/13; "Organic Food & Organic Beverages Market—Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends and Forecast, 2013–2019," www.seerchandmarkets.com, 0/11; "Organic Food Market—Global Industry Size, Share, Trends, Analysis, and Forecasts 2012–2018," www.spaincynterentrepreneur.com; "Organic Food Trends Profile" by Marsha Laub, *Agriculture Marketing Resource Center*, www.agmrc.org, 11/13



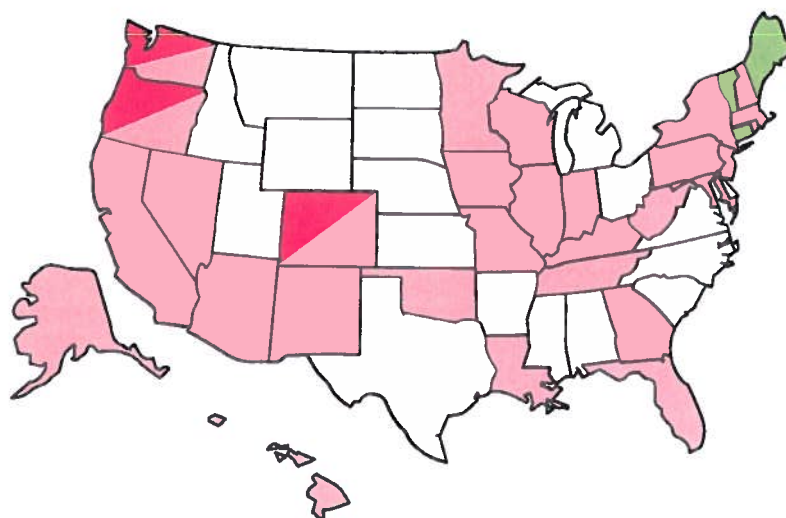
GE FOOD LABELING: STATES TAKE ACTION

IN 2011, CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY submitted a formal legal petition to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on behalf of over 650 companies and organizations demanding that FDA require the mandatory labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods. Since it was filed, 55 members of Congress and over 1.4 million people have submitted comments in support of the petition; yet, FDA has failed to take action to require the labeling of GE foods. Because of this, U.S. States have taken the lead in protecting the public's right to know what is in their food. In 2013, Connecticut and Maine passed GE labeling laws. In total, 54 bills were introduced across 26 states, and a Washington State ballot initiative narrowly lost, 51-49%. And the momentum is only growing.

Already in 2014, 35 new GE food labeling bills were introduced in 20 states,

with an Oregon ballot initiative also on target for November 2014. Vermont also passed a GE labeling law set to go into effect in 2016. In the two-year period, over 70 bills and ballot initiatives were introduced across 30 states (see map below).

The international marketplace has long agreed that the labeling of GE foods is proper. Global food policy research conducted by CFS confirms that 64 countries, including the member nations of the European Union and countries as diverse as Russia, China, Brazil, Australia, Turkey, and South Africa, require standards of mandatory GE food labeling.



THE TOP REASONS TO SUPPORT STATE GE FOOD LABELING LEGISLATION

Consumers have a right to know what they feed their families. Unlabeled GE foods are misleading, and States have a duty to prevent consumer deception by requiring that factual information be disclosed in order to protect their citizenry from such deception. More fundamentally, U.S. courts have recognized a “right-to-know” rooted in the individual rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and by common law.

States have the legal authority to require labeling to ensure customer understanding. Particularly in the absence of any Federal leadership, States can and should enact legislation requiring GE labeling on behalf of their citizenry. State labeling laws are well supported legally because they are rationally related to numerous state interests, including but not limited to: protecting consumers from misleading products and protecting public health, the environment, and the economy.

FDA’s current labeling policy is unlawfully inconsistent. FDA already requires the labeling of nearly 4,000 ingredients, additives, and processes. Food labels do not depict a “skull and crossbones,” as some may complain, nor are labels required only for foods that have been proven dangerous. In the U.S., we do not label dangerous foods; we take them off the market. In reality, labels provide information to consumers. For instance, whether or not orange juice is from concentrate or whether food has been irradiated are currently communicated to consumers via labels required by FDA.

Voluntary labeling is completely inadequate. Voluntary labeling is not a substitute for mandatory disclosure. It’s been more than 13 years since FDA approved voluntary GE labeling, and exactly zero companies have voluntarily disclosed that their foods were produced through genetic engineering. Markets only work when consumers have the information needed to make informed choices.

Over 90% of Americans support labeling of GE foods. Polls consistently show that over 90% of Americans believe GE foods should be labeled. A recent illustrative poll by the Mellman Group found that not only did over 90% of respondents support labeling, but nearly all Democrats (93% favor, 2% oppose), Independents (90% favor, 5% oppose) and Republicans (89% favor, 5% oppose) favor labeling.

Labeling GE foods will not increase costs to consumers or food manufacturers. According to a recent study by independent food-marketing expert Kai Robertson, changes to a food manufacturer’s product labels have not been found to affect the prices paid by shoppers.

This is largely because food producers regularly, and even weekly, make changes to the labels of their products for marketing or regulatory reasons—without increasing their costs.

ACTIVE STATE LEGISLATION AS OF JUNE 10, 2014

STATE	# BILLS
Georgia	1
Hawaii	1
Illinois	2
Iowa	2
Louisiana	1
Massachusetts	4
Missouri	1
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	2
New York	5
Oklahoma	1
Pennsylvania	2
Rhode Island	4

STATE	BALLOT
Colorado	✓
Oregon	✓

TOTAL STATES	TOTAL LEG.
15	29



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Call your state representatives to support labeling in your state.
- Tell Congress to support GE food labeling at <http://bit.ly/MyRightToKnow>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Genetically modified (GM) crops are promoted on the basis of a range of far-reaching claims from the GM crop industry and its supporters. They say that GM crops:

- Are an extension of natural breeding and do not pose different risks from naturally bred crops
- Are safe to eat and can be more nutritious than naturally bred crops
- Are strictly regulated for safety
- Increase crop yields
- Reduce pesticide use
- Benefit farmers and make their lives easier
- Bring economic benefits
- Benefit the environment
- Can help solve problems caused by climate change
- Reduce energy use
- Will help feed the world.

However, a large and growing body of scientific and other authoritative evidence shows that these claims are not true. On the contrary, evidence presented in this report indicates that GM crops:

- Are laboratory-made, using technology that is totally different from natural breeding methods, and pose different risks from non-GM crops
- Can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts
- Are not adequately regulated to ensure safety
- Do not increase yield potential
- Do not reduce pesticide use but increase it
- Create serious problems for farmers, including herbicide-tolerant “superweeds”, compromised soil quality, and increased disease susceptibility in crops
- Have mixed economic effects
- Harm soil quality, disrupt ecosystems, and reduce biodiversity
- Do not offer effective solutions to climate change
- Are as energy-hungry as any other chemically-farmed crops
- Cannot solve the problem of world hunger but distract from its real causes – poverty, lack of access to food and, increasingly, lack of access to land to grow it on.

Based on the evidence presented in this report, there is no need to take risks with GM crops when effective, readily available, and sustainable solutions to the problems that GM technology is claimed to address already exist. Conventional plant breeding, in some cases helped by safe modern technologies like gene mapping and marker assisted selection, continues to outperform GM in producing high-yield, drought-tolerant, and pest- and disease-resistant crops that can meet our present and future food needs.