

February 20, 2001

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To: FDA

Re: GM Food Standards

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Cc: George Bush, Dick Cheney, Jane Henney, Barbara Boxer, 0013 701 MAR 26 10:27
Dianne Feinstein and Lynn Woolsey

I am writing to strongly encourage the FDA to modify the proposed GM Food standards to take into account the majority of Americans desire that these foods have mandatory labeling. I want to know what I am buying and so do most other Americans. It is outrageous that in the information age our own government would resist our right to know what is in the food we eat.

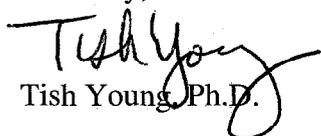
As a Ph.D. Biochemist with many years in the biotechnology field I have serious questions concerning GM foods being freely distributed throughout our food supply without the appropriate safety testing and long term studies that are necessary to determine the safety of GM foods. Biochemistry is very complicated and genes that are transferred from one organism to another may have effects that are unpredictable. Genes are often used to express more than one protein or can be used differently by the host organism than their natural host. In addition genes crossover continuously and this can result in genetic pollution as pollen is transported from field to field. What safeguards do we have in place to ensure that future generations will have healthy food supplies? We do not understand what can happen and the FDA is not ensuring that we ever know if we do not undertake long-term studies.

The pro-GMO food supporters say that this technology will result in increased food production, more nutrient dense foods and food that can survive harsher conditions (drought, desertification etc.), but this is not the food that is being distributed throughout the world's food supply. The GM food industry is marketing foods that can tolerate higher herbicide and pesticide usage, foods that produce these agents themselves and foods with seeds that can't reproduce new crops. Their interests are in profit and market share, not increasing the food distribution to the poorest in the world or improving the health of the consumer. It is their right in a free market economy for these businesses to have these goals, but these goals should not be the FDA's. Our government agencies must put people's health and these long term risk into the equation. That has not been happening and it must change.

Biotechnology provides us with powerful tools that will continue to help our society. However we have to ask what good is being served today and what will be served tomorrow. I believe we will eventually be eating more biotech foods to compensate for environmental factors, but this is not what the industry is currently doing. We produce enough nutritious food in the world, it just isn't distributed to the people who need it. GM foods gives even more control of food production and distribution to a few companies that determine who get the food and at what price. Again this is their right in our economy, but it is the responsibility of our government institutions to ensure that the public good is served.

Regulate these foods! Mandate that they be labeled and that safety testing be done to ensure a safe food supply for all of us now and tomorrow!

Sincerely,


Tish Young, Ph.D.

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