February 6, 2001

Docket No. 00N-1396 & Docket No. 00D-1598 2627 '02 FEB 13 A11:30
FDA Commissioner, Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Subject: GEF's (Genetically Engineered Foods)/We need to have full disclosure to public in labeling

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to express my views on genetically engineered foods. Genetic engineering involves manipulations of genes between different species and allows scientists to bypass the natural barriers which protect the genetic integrity of species. Foods containing or produced from genetic engineering can cause allergic responses, be toxic, have lowered nutritional value and/or compromise immune responses in consumers. Likewise, genetically engineered crops can have unpredictable, irreversible changes to the environment.

The FDA's proposal for companies to merely voluntarily consult with the FDA concerning the safety of their foods is totally inadequate. The FDA must require mandatory pre-market safety testing. The FDA's proposed rule that environmental review procedures be exempt under the National Environmental Policy Act does not protect the environment. The FDA must require mandatory pre-market environmental review. The FDA's proposed rule makes all labeling of genetically engineered foods (GEFs) only voluntary. This does not protect my right to know or allow me consumer choice to protect my family and the environment. Voluntary labeling unfairly reverses the financial burden onto producers who do not use GEFs. Mandatory labeling is essential for the traceability of GEF products throughout the food supply for health professionals. Mandatory labeling also protects overseas markets for farmers. The FDA must require mandatory labeling of GEFs.

The FDS's proposed rule is unlikely to provide the public with adequate information on GEFs for independent review. The FDA notes that producers of GEFs may claim that any such information, including the pre-market notification, is trade secret or confidential business information subject to exemption from public disclosure requirements. The FDA must require full disclosure. I will settle for nothing less than mandatory safety testing, labeling, pre-market environmental review, and full disclosure. All GEFs should be taken off supermarket shelves until these are established.

Very truly yours,

Barbara Weith

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