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## FDA rules won't require labeling of genetically modified salmon

By Lyndsey Layton

Saturday, *September 18, 2010*; 11:20 PM

As the Food and Drug Administration considers whether to approve genetically modified salmon, one thing seems certain: Shoppers staring at fillets in the seafood department will find it tough to pick out the conventional fish from the one created with genes from another species.

Despite a growing public demand for more information about how food is produced, that won't happen with the salmon because of idiosyncracies embedded in federal regulations.

The FDA says it cannot require a label on the genetically modified food once it determines that the altered fish is not "materially" different from other salmon - something agency scientists have said is true.

Perhaps more surprising, conventional food makers say the FDA has made it difficult for them to boast that their products do not contain genetically modified ingredients.

The labeling question has emerged as the FDA determines whether to approve the fish, an Atlantic salmon known as AquAdvantage that grows twice as fast as its natural counterpart. The decision carries great weight because, while genetically modified agriculture has been permitted for years and engineered crops are widely used in processed foods, this would be the first modified animal allowed for human consumption in the United States. The AquAdvantage salmon has been given a gene from the ocean pout, an eel-like fish, and a growth hormone from a Chinook salmon.

### 'The public wants to know'

Consumer advocates say they worry about labeling for genetically engineered beef, pork and other fish, which are lining up behind the salmon for federal approval.

"The public wants to know and the public has a right to know," said Marion Nestle, a professor in the Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health Department at New York University. "I think the agency has discretion, but it's under enormous political pressure to approve [the salmon] without labeling."

The debate will be taken up this week, with an advisory committee meeting Sunday and Monday on whether to allow the modified fish, and a separate panel meeting Tuesday on whether the fish should be labeled. The panels will offer recommendations to the FDA commissioner, who will decide both matters.

The biotechnology industry is opposed to mandatory labeling, saying it will only bewilder a public that is not well informed about genetic engineering.

"Extra labeling only confuses the consumer," said David Edwards, director of animal biotechnology at the Biotechnology Industry Organization. "It differentiates products that are not different. As we stick more labels on products that don't really tell us anything more, it makes it harder for consumers to make their choices."

The FDA defends its approach, saying it is simply following the law, which prohibits misleading

labels on food. And the fact that a food, in this case salmon, is produced through a different process, is not sufficient to require a label.

The controversy comes at a time when Americans seem to want to know more about their food - where it is grown, how it is produced and what it contains. Books criticizing industrial agriculture have become bestsellers, farmers markets are expanding and organic food is among the fastest-growing segments of the food industry.

### **The FDA itself is part of a new effort to improve nutrition information on processed foods**

In the European Union and Japan, it is nearly impossible to find genetically modified foods, largely because laws require labeling, said William K. Hallman, director of the Food Policy Institute at Rutgers University. "No one wants to carry products with such a label," he said. "The food companies figure that consumers won't buy it."

There is nothing to stop salmon producers or food makers in the United States from voluntarily labeling their products as genetically engineered - except a fear of rejection in the marketplace, Hallman said. "I don't know of a single company that does that," he said.

The FDA maintains it can only require labeling if a genetically engineered food is somehow different from the conventional version - if it has an unusual texture, taste, nutritional component or allergen, for example.

Although some consumer advocates maintain there are important differences, the agency's scientists have already said they see no "biologically relevant" variations between the AquAdvantage salmon and traditional salmon.

Consumers could be certain of getting the non-modified version if they bought salmon labeled as "wild," but most salmon consumed in this country is farmed.

Ever since the FDA approved the first genetically altered material for use in food in 1992, when [Monsanto](#) developed a synthetic hormone injected into cows to increase milk production, the agency has held that it cannot require food producers to label products as genetically engineered.

In the intervening years, the use of genetically engineered crops has skyrocketed; 93 percent of this year's soybean crop is genetically engineered, according to the U.S. Agriculture Department.

Byproducts of those crops - soy lecithin, for example - are found in thousands of processed foods from chocolate bars to breakfast cereal; none is labeled as containing genetically modified ingredients.

### **No 'Hormone Free' either**

The labeling matter is further complicated because the FDA has maintained a tough stance for food makers who don't use genetically engineered ingredients and want to promote their products as an alternative. The agency allows manufacturers to label their products as not genetically engineered as long as those labels are accurate and do not imply that the products are therefore more healthful.

The agency warned the dairy industry in 1994 that it could not use "Hormone Free" labeling on milk from cows that are not given engineered hormones, because all milk contains some hormones.

It has sent a flurry of enforcement letters to food makers, including B&G Foods, which was told it could not use the phrase "GMO-free" on its Polaner All Fruit strawberry spread label because GMO refers to genetically modified organisms and strawberries are produce, not organisms.

It told the maker of Spectrum Canola Oil that it could not use a label that included a red circle with a line through it and the words "GMO," saying the symbol suggested that there was something wrong with genetically engineered food.

"This to me raises questions about whose interest the FDA is protecting," said Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich (D-Ohio), who has introduced legislation that would require labeling for genetically

engineered food. "They are clearly protecting industry and not the public."

One state with a sizable salmon fishing industry - Alaska - passed a law in 2005 that requires labeling of any genetically engineered fish sold there.

"One side of the argument says let's give consumers sovereignty over their food choices," Hallman said. "The other says we've done the science on this and it's no different, so if we put a label on it, we're implying it's somehow risky and that's like government imposed false advertising."

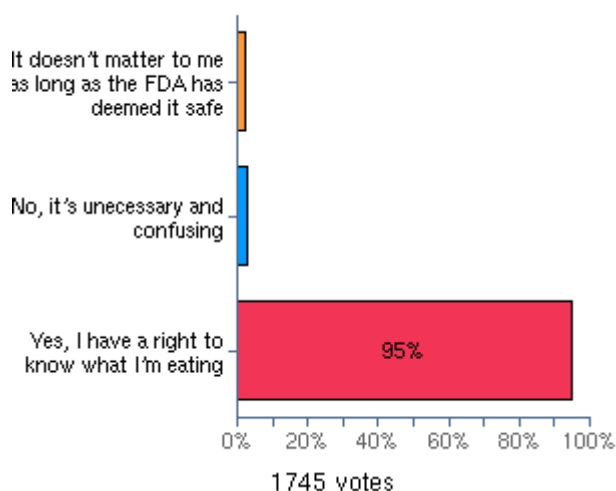


### Should genetically-modified food be labeled?

#### Should genetically-modified food be labeled?

- Yes, I have a right to know what I'm eating
- No, it's unnecessary and confusing
- It doesn't matter to me as long as the FDA has deemed it safe

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By Abha Bhattacharai | *September 17, 2010*; 5:34 PM ET | Category: [National](#)

## Comments

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\* There should be a bright line around the issue of laboratory-based genetic modification.

Note that something like 95% of the soybeans produced in the U.S. are genetically modified. The modification itself isn't physiologically deleterious. But the modification specifically allows the soil to be treated with powerful herbicides -- meaning more crap in our food.

Recently a Federal Circuit Court judge ruled that FDA approval of genetically modified sugar beets had violated normal review processes. As a result 85% of beets in the U.S. are Monsanto's Roundup-Ready and are hard to withdraw from the market.

The massive use of these herbicides induces herbicide resistance. But Monsanto already has second generation GM products ready to go, so they can DOUBLE UP on the herbicide treatment. This is a vicious cycle.

Note that, for organic weeding, after a few years the weed seed load of the land decreases and the problem becomes progressively less. With herbicide strategies -- aside from introducing more and more chemicals into our food supply at a national level -- the problem becomes progressively worse.

By all means -- no GM without labeling. I am a molecular biologist.

**Posted by: horatio3 | September 19, 2010 12:18 AM**

\* Labeling Yes: I believe that genetic engineering may be one of the reasons for dementia-related diseases. These types of changes do chemical damage, which directly effects the brain and nervous system. It's a no-brainer, label so we can decide for ourselves. This is a highly personal decision which should be left up to the individual not the government.

**Posted by: prossers7 | September 19, 2010 6:22 AM**

\* Food should be labeled. Industry cannot be trusted to do what's right by the consumer. Unfortunately, corporations and not the consumer run the government, and the Tea Party hopes to do away with all government oversight.

But I don't eat farmed salmon already because of the poor conditions in which it is raised. GMO or not, farmed salmon is bad for the environment.

**Posted by: jjedif | September 19, 2010 8:09 AM**

\* Unlike the kosher tax on aluminum foil (The Washington Post of Nov. 2, 1987, Rabbi Schulem Rubin:

"Kosher doesn't taste any better; kosher isn't healthier; kosher doesn't have less salmonella. You can eat a Holly Farm chicken which sells for 39 cents a pound on sale, and next taste a Kosher chicken selling for \$1.69 a pound, and not tell the difference. There's a lot of money to be made! Religion is not based on logic!"), it makes perfect sense to label ALL GMO food.

I do not support Monsanto, nor its lawsuits against farmers whose fields have been passively contaminated with round-up or dairy producers who label their products as bovine-growth hormone free, and have no wish to ingest any FRANKENFOOD.

I stopped drinking soy milk. If salmon is not labeled, i will stop eating salmon.

**Posted by: mischipotles | September 19, 2010 8:15 AM**

\* The FDA's job is to make people aware of food content that makes some difference to their health. There is no reason to label genetically modified food just to please some luddites who prefer to resist technological change and live in the past. Genetically modified food should be labeled only when the genetic modification makes some measureable difference that changes the quality of the food. The labeling should be about the quality of the food and not about whether or not that quality

was achieved by genetic modification.

**Posted by: dnjake | September 19, 2010 8:47 AM**

\* The fact that the FDA says that consumers do not need to know that the salmon they want to put into their bodies is genetically-modified gives us consumers the LOUD and CLEAR SIGN that the FDA is OUT of TOUCH with what the American consumer wants and needs to know about the food they are injecting into their bodies and their children's bodies.

The FOOD and DRUG Administration as it stands now needs to be disbanded and replaced with a consumer lead group that is more interested in the people than a FDA that sleeps with the drug and food corporations while claiming loyalty to consumers.

Look above at the 95 percent of the people who need to know where their food comes from vs the FDA that says they do not need to know and the difference is apparent. The Salmon industry does not need for Americans to know how they process the salmon they want consumers to buy and inject into their families bodies and the FDA readily agrees, how in this example is the FDA looking out for the health and well-being of this Nation's consumers? Right. It isn't and it hasn't in quite a while.

Replace the FDA, now, rather than later to save the life and health of the American consumer.

**Posted by: rannrann | September 19, 2010 9:01 AM**

\* If it is genetically-modified it is different, period. Whether a scientist cannot determine the difference is completely beside the point. Really.

**Posted by: rannrann | September 19, 2010 9:09 AM**

\* If salmon is not labeled, I will stop eating salmon. No more salmon - No more FDA.

The FDA is totally in bed with Big Pharma and Big Agri-biz. They allow our food to be poisoned. In the case of HFCS - this fake sugar is causing obesity and diabetes. Now ADM wants to change the name of this poison to protect their profits.

The FDA is nothing but a government trade organization for the pharmaceutical companies and the food industry. What a disgrace.

**Posted by: alance | September 19, 2010 9:15 AM**

\* Should genetically-modified food be labeled? YES, a thousand times YES!!

**Posted by: debstrom | September 19, 2010 12:28 PM**

\* Let's call a spade a spade, the FDA is in cahoots with big-agra...when the health & welfare of Americans should be the primary concern, big-agra looks at one thing and one thing only, PROFITS, and forget about the consumers...bottom line, the FDA is and has been delinquent to protect the consumer; proper labeling would give the consumer a choice and no doubt significantly effect the bottom line profit margin. Eating products of unknown consequences is like playing russian-roulette, BANG!!!

**Posted by: juke2 | September 19, 2010 12:37 PM**

\* Our govt can not get any more corrupt than it is today. It is disgusting that our entire political system has sold us out at all levels. We need to clean house top to bottom and this just serves as a great example.

**Posted by: Desertdiva1 | September 19, 2010 1:03 PM**

\* These corporate monsters know that if "GMO" had to stamped on everything they made using modified genetics, their business would end.

Thank you FDA, President Obama, and all the rest for doing nothing for your "fellow countrymen". We know, in your eyes, we count for nothing of consequence: money and the power it give you is is

your only objective.

Drop dead.

**Posted by: veerle1 | September 19, 2010 2:14 PM**

\* To horatio3:

Monsanto is a disgusting corporate monster that should be destroyed. Referring to their seeds as "Round-up Ready", they have the gall to encourage dumping of more poisons into the ecosystem to "increase yield".

You clearly point out the greed and weakness of the system, and its continuation regardless of warnings from scientists like yourself, only points to the fact the people running this government know nothing of the danger or consequences. They are only concerned about the bottom line.

These whores to corporate profit are more dangerous than any other supposed enemy we're engaged with in Iraq or Afghanistan. We need to wage battle with them and win.

**Posted by: veerle1 | September 19, 2010 2:26 PM**

\* Unless it is wild caught, I am not buying salmon. I don't want this farmed, GMO crap in my body.

I think this all goes back to when Congress first sold out to the corporate food industry in the 70's. Until then, anything that wasn't "real" had to be labeled "imitation". The food industry's lobbyist successfully had "imitation" removed from their labels, and now you have to read ingredients lists to figure out if your butter is really just butter.

Europe resoundingly rejects all this stuff. I wonder why? I am sure it is not just misplaced skepticism.

**Posted by: BurtReynolds | September 19, 2010 3:06 PM**

\* Not only do we (my husband and I) want labels on fish and shellfish sold to us in the markets, we also want to know what we're eating if we order a meal at a restaurant (salmon or any other G/E foods).

The FDA cannot be allowed to wiggle out of this responsibility.

Studies on long-term effects of G/E foods on us humans have not been published, that I know.

That I can tell, there hasn't been enough time to develop rigorous testing.

We are not going to sit still and allow this latest corporate shill to make money on the back of the (possible) risk to our future health, or that of our children or grand-children, no matter how hard they push and shove.

If it's "caveat emptor", the least the government can do is provide us with the information to protect ourselves.

**Posted by: Judy-in-TX | September 19, 2010 3:17 PM**

\* The FDA is under the sway of corporations-that is very clear. They do not care that much of what they say is "safe" in reality will kill you.

Since Monsanto is fully enmeshed in this government, no one should follow anything that the FDA says.

They are all about money and greed, and Monsanto wants to own all of the genetics for every food item grown. This way, they can stop people from growing their own food and basically, starve Americans into doing whatever they want them to do. Whomever owns the food, owns the country.

Be warned.

**Posted by: Frit | September 20, 2010 1:22 PM**

\* What do they mean they can't require labeling of G/E foods? That's the reason FDA exist. And they wonder why most Americans are so mistrustful of their own government. Get a clue...PLEASE.

**Posted by: PracticalIndependent | September 20, 2010 1:51 PM**

\* LABEL IT! I will not eat farmed fish or feedlot meats as it is. Label all GMO foods so that people can make informed decisions. It disgusts me that Europe and Japan are so far ahead of us in this thinking. What's the matter? Worried that people with the facts will choose healthier, sustainable agriculture?

**Posted by: HappyArmyWife | September 21, 2010 5:23 AM**

\* To veerle1, your outrage should be directed to the political administrations in office in the '80s and early '90s when genetically modified foods were introduced to grocery stores. Lobbying groups, Monsanto, ConAgra, and Cargill were and are the beneficiaries of GMO foods. This was forced on the American people long before Obama came on the scene. Congress accepts money from lobbyists to keep labels off GMO foods; if Congress was looking out for the American public, they could change the rules the FDA operates under and force "fake" fish to have a label. But they also know that if there's a label, the American public won't buy it. I know I certainly wouldn't. Now that it's coming to a store near all of us, I'll give up salmon since it won't be labeled. France refused to allow GMO foods into their country in the late '90s, thanks to the outcry of citizens refusing to budge on the issue. Expect a rise in different kinds of cancers and new diseases due to man tampering with the food supply.

**Posted by: cricket35 | September 21, 2010 9:44 PM**

\* If they don't label GM food, it'll just be another sign that (1) lobbyists (this time Big Agra) still rule Washington, and (2) "Change We Can Believe In" was a sham.

**Posted by: Fletch\_F\_Fletch | September 29, 2010 10:59 AM**

\* The only possible reason the FDA would not want labels is because big business is afraid people will use their brains and make a decision that might not include buying this product.

If the FDA were running elections they would not allow debates or any info on the candidates to be given to the public.

I want to know what I am eating!!!!!! Duh!!!!

**Posted by: dkeller1 | September 29, 2010 11:30 AM**

\* mischipotles, you don't have to give up drinking soy milk.

In the United States, all soy that is labeled "organic soy" is guaranteed to not be genetically-manipulated and not be treated with herbicides by Federal Law.

**Posted by: asmith1 | September 29, 2010 12:13 PM**

\* People, please wake up, almost all corn, soy, canola, cottonseed and beet sugar is now GMO in the U.S. and you are probably all ready eating it every day. This is why there is so much disease and cancer in America now. Recent studies have shown that eating GMO foods and having children is not a good idea. There is a 25% chance that your newborn child will die right after birth if there are GMO foods in your diet. If your child lives and grows up and has children more of them can die after birth and the research show that they will probably all be sterile. That means you will not be grandparents. Your kids are sterile because you fed them unlabelled GMO grains and sugar, thanks to the FDA's Michael Taylor, a former lawyer from Monsanto. Mr. Taylor is now the head of Food Safety at the FDA and if Senate Bill 510 passes he can get rid of healthy food including organic food and food from home gardens through the threat of 10 year jail terms with no judicial review and fines of \$250,000. Who would farm if Monsanto hangs those threats over one's head through it's lackey's at the FDA?

**Posted by: meadowrock | September 30, 2010 1:37 PM**

# Monsanto

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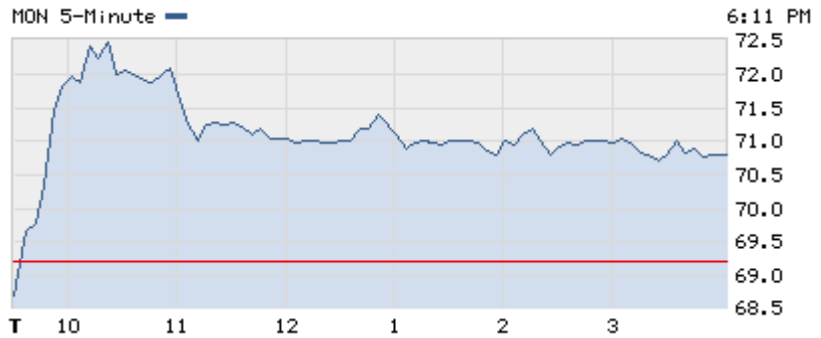
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MON	70.79	+1.66	+2.40%	Vol: 18,944,836
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52wk Range	<b>44.61-87.06</b>
P/E Ratio:	<b>35.22</b>
Dividend Yield:	<b>1.58%</b>
Market Cap (mil):	<b>18.94</b>



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