

National Seasoning Manufacturers Association, Inc.
228 Phelps Avenue, Cresskill, NJ 07626
Web: www.seasoningmanufacturers.org

Tel: 201.657.1989
gerri@seasoningmanufacturers.org

NSMA

National Seasoning Manufacturers Association

July 23, 2015

Honorable Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

As the House begins consideration of H.R. 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015, the National Seasoning Manufacturers Association (NSMA) would like to emphasize the critical need for this legislation. Ensuring passage of the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act is a priority issue for NSMA and we urge all members vote in favor of H.R. 1599.

The National Seasoning Manufacturers Association (NSMA) is a trade association representing the U.S. seasoning industry. Founded in 1973, our membership manufactures the majority of the processed seasonings in the United States. The NSMA is comprised of member companies that produce food ingredients including but not limited to seasonings, spices, flavorings, additives, and other vegetable ingredients and derivatives. As suppliers of multi-component ingredients, our products must meet the marketing requirements of numerous customers producing consumer package goods. Accordingly, our membership has been significantly impacted by the current state of confusion in the marketplace regarding genetically engineered food and food ingredients.

Special interest groups have utilized the term GMO to stigmatize food from GE crops and create consumer concern. The result is that for many of today's consumers GE is an emotional issue that they do not understand. Yet they have been encouraged to believe that GE foods should be identified (labeled) and avoided. Awareness without knowledge is of little value, but food companies have responded with many non-GMO label claims. In addition, there is an increase in private certification entities that market their own standard and capitalize on today's consumer who wants "instant information" on food labels and are not aware that there is no standard definition of what it means to be non-GMO. Consumers are also not aware that there is no standard way to describe the claim in a neutral manner; nor is there a way for them to know if the claim is accurate (i.e. that they are actually buying a food whose ingredients did not come from a GE crop).

NSMA believes H.R. 1599 is needed to avoid being subject to state efforts to require specific labels for food sold within each jurisdiction. Without a national standard to define when a food or ingredient is genetically engineered, our best labeling option would be "may contain ingredients produced through genetic engineering". Seeing this on 80% of processed foods would be of little value to consumers.

We also endorse a national standard to define when a food or ingredient is GE-free. Meeting different standards set by private certification entities diverts both capital and human resources from our main goal: produce safe, quality food. H.R. 1599 would ensure that GE-free foods could receive a proper evaluation and certification through a process administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

NSMA believes that this bill will help alleviate current consumer confusion with clear and consistent information. We strongly support H.R. 1599 and urge you to vote "Yes".

Sincerely yours,



Geraldina Cristantiello
Executive Director

Officers:

President - Tim Sonntag, Wixon Inc.
Treasurer - Rodney Schaffer, Con Yeager Spice Co.
Secretary - Liz Morris, Elite Spice, Inc.
Executive Director - Geraldina Cristantiello

Directors:

Moty Bar, Elite Spice, Inc.
Leslie Cammarata, Chesapeake Spice Co.
Greg Gamble, Asenzya, Inc.
Rodney Hayes, McCormick & Co., Inc.

Alina Lastra, Badia Spices Inc.
Steve Markus, Sterigenics
Jean Theiss, Newly Weds Foods
Carol Yuknis, Griffith Laboratories USA