

Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Dear Western Organic Dairy Producer:

Please read below and contact your U.S. Senator, TODAY!

This morning WODPA's Executive Director reached out to Montana Senator Jon Tester's Legislative Assistant (Justin Folsom) informing him, via email, that WODPA opposes the attached proposed Senate Bill which would require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a national disclosure standard for bioengineered foods. This bill, which OTA is said to have had a hand in drafting, is far too weak to be considered. It allows manufacturers to skate on all GMO ingredients that are in a product but are not the most prominent ingredient. There could be 6 ingredients of which 5 are GMO but the manufacturer would not have to disclose the GMO status because the primary ingredient (which could be much less than half the total) is not GMO. Further, the definition of Bioengineered is very weak, narrow, and does not include all technologies covered by the National Organic Program definition for excluded methods. The bill would require complex rulemaking, studies and audits by USDA; all of which are unnecessary. The bill would allow digital link disclosure which very few consumers would likely utilize. Imagine yourself using your cell phone to check labels for the presence of GMO's. NOT likely?

Mr. Folsom was informed that WODPA believes that the standard must:

1. Require a GMO symbol placed on the principal display panel,
2. Define genetically modify organisms (GMO) using the excluded methods definition found in Part 205.2 of the National Organic Program Regulations.

That definition reads:

"A variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms or influence their growth and development by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes and are not considered compatible with organic production. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). Such methods do not include the use of traditional breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture."

3. Require that all ingredients that are the product of genetically modify organisms, listed in the ingredients statement, be identified with an asterisk. The asterisk would be defined at the end of the ingredient statement as meaning "GMO." Unprocessed genetically modify commodities would be required to be labeled as GMO.

We need GMO labeling. We need truth in labeling. We need transparent, truthful labeling. Our asks accomplish each of the preceding.

The bill does not need to be long and it does not need complex rulemaking, studies and audits by USDA. The bill needs to be straight forward; define GMO and state how products of GMO are to be identified.

Mr. Folsom was informed that WODPA does not object to proposed sections 295 or 296, which deal with Federal Preemption and Exclusion from Federal Preemption. These items are addressed on the last page of the attached draft bill. WODPA's non-objection to these provisions is contingent on WODPA's recommendations being accepted.

Finally, Mr. Folsom was informed that WODPA is a nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation. Our purpose is to enable organic dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area in the west, to maintain the sustainability of organic dairy farming. We represent over 275 organic dairy farm families throughout the Western United States. Organic dairy production in the western states accounts for over half of the Nation's milking cows and milk production. WODPA is the ONLY organic dairy organization working specifically for organic dairymen in the Western United States.

Again, Please contact your U.S. Senator, TODAY!

Sincerely,

Richard H. Mathews

Executive Director

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