

# Why Campbell's Thinks GMO Labeling Is A Good Thing

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GMO labeling

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Few topics in agriculture are as controversial in the public eye as GMOs. For more than two years, the labeling of GMO ingredients on food packaging has been a hot topic. As consumers continue to buy more non-GMO products, one major food company has become a champion of the need for labeling: Campbell Soup Company.

“We decided to embrace it,” says Kelly Johnston, the company’s vice president of government affairs, who spoke from the mainstage at the 2017 Top Producer Seminar.



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Campbell's research shows a majority of consumers are concerned about GMO labeling, even though they rank other food-related concerns higher.

The company's position developed against a backdrop of changing state laws. In 2014, Vermont became the first state to pass a mandatory GMO labeling law. Connecticut and Maine enacted laws at the same time because of previously passed trigger bills, Johnston says.



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**Consumer Transparency.** Even though Congress overturned those bills, Campbell's announced its decision to label all GMO ingredients in its products in January 2016. In a corresponding blog post, Campbell's wrote: "Our purpose calls for us to acknowledge that consumers appreciate what goes into our food, and why—so they can feel good about the choices they make, for themselves and their loved ones."

Nearly two-thirds of



**#TPS17 Takeaways**

- The path of federal GMO labeling is unclear after a recent executive order.
- Food-makers such as Campbell Soup Company support national labeling.
- Many consumers want ingredients labeled but not necessarily removed.

Americans favor a requirement that food manufacturers label products

with GMOs, Johnston says.

Others such as the Non-GMO Project, a nonprofit that aims to build and protect a non-GMO food supply, says more than 92% of U.S. consumers and 88% of Canadians think GMOs should be labeled. The NPD Group, which studies consumer spending and trends, reports 47% of consumers want GMO ingredients labeled rather than removed from food. Other data shows a movement away from GMOs. The 2015 Hartman Group Health and Wellness Study found 40% of consumers are cutting back on GMO consumption.

**Regulatory Uncertainty.** It's unclear whether GMO labels will be required by federal law going forward. A compromise bill approved by Congress in 2016 requires mandatory disclosure of GMOs on food packaging, Johnston says. It also instructed USDA to conduct a consumer study and finalize regulations.

This January, President Donald Trump issued an executive order mandating agencies to get rid of two existing regulations for every new regulation added. That could prevent USDA from meeting its 2018 deadline given by Congress.

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## What's In Your Soup?

It's



important to reassure consumers GMOs are safe and not scary, says Kelly Johnston, vice president of government affairs for Campbell

Soup Company. It's possible to communicate that message while continuing to inform consumers about GMOs in their food products, he says. Here are some core principles of the company's labeling policy.

**Federal Preemption.** Campbell's supports a federal mandate on GMO labeling and opposes implementation of state-specific laws.

**Informational Labeling.** Mandatory labeling should not only provide information about GMO technology but even allow for statements that describe its benefits.

**Safe Ingredients.** Campbell's plans to continue using GMO ingredients in its products, Johnston says. "There are no major reformulations planned specifically to avoid GMOs," he notes.

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