

# NEWS RELEASE

## Generated Monsanto Obstruction

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The acronym *GMO* usually refers to Genetically Modified Organism. In this case, there is a direct connection with Monsanto, Dupont, and other large biotech companies that produce genetically engineered seeds, which grow into GMO crops, and find their way into an estimated 70 percent of processed foods sold in American grocery stores.

Monsanto is trying to manipulate Congress to pass a final Farm Bill reauthorization with provisions that will wipe out citizens' rights to State laws intended to protect their health and safety when it applies to the labeling of GMO products. It is important to note that 24 States have considered legislation that would require labeling of foods containing genetically modified organisms (GMOS).

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, the Senate voted 66 to 27 to approve its farm bill, S.954, the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013. During debate prior to this action, an amendment sponsored by Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and four other Senators to clarify that States can voluntarily enact their own GMO labeling laws was defeated. An amendment of Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) to overturn the so-called "Monsanto Protection Act" (MPA) was defeated. This new law permits Monsanto, DuPont, and other companies to sell genetically modified seeds that have not been properly examined for their effect on other farmers, the environment, and human health. It grants judicial immunity to big farming companies who sell seeds and plant crops that are later determined to be unsafe for human or animal consumption.

The good news is that the MPA is law only until Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, unless extended by Congress. This is because it was a part of the Continuing Resolution to fund the government until the end of this Federal fiscal year when passed by the House and Senate in January. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) is on record in support of not extending the MPA provision in a Federal spending bill through the appropriations process. She also stated that it would be inappropriate for its inclusion in a final Congressional farm bill. The Senate bill does not include explicit language to block States from enacting their own GMO labeling laws.

It is a different situation with the House bill, H.R.1947, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management (FARRM) Act of 2013. The Agriculture Committee added amendments by Congressman Steve King (R-IA) to directly prohibit States from enacting GMO labeling laws and to extend the MPA. The Congressman's own State is one of the 24 States that had GMO labeling legislation considered in their 2013 legislative sessions.

H.R.1947 has been voted out of committee and will be scheduled for a full House vote in the coming weeks. If the bills pass each chamber, a joint House and Senate Conference Committee will have to be appointed to work out any differences. This is also not assured in the current Congressional political legislative climate.

These big corporate farming players continue spending millions of lobbying dollars to protect their anti-GMO corporate policy and legislation at both State and Federal levels of governments to maintain special privileges that thwart individual choice and knowledge. Health freedom advocates across the country are well aware of the millions of Monsanto dollars being spent to obstruct the common sense of millions of Americans, especially in California. State legislatures in Vermont and Connecticut moved ahead this month with votes to make food companies declare genetically modified ingredients on their packages.

The unknown human health risks associated with the use of GM technology and the release of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in crops and their subsequent processing into the human food chain cannot be dismissed. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not require genetically modified foods to carry a label but it does require that labels tell consumers how much caffeine is contained in a given food or beverage. NHF members, and thousands of like-minded individuals, believe that people should have the ability to make informed choices on their own consumption of food products. Without labeling there is no knowledge. States should have the right to enact public laws supported by their own citizens. Monsanto and other companies are using the Federal Preemption Doctrine to block the States' inherent rights, reserved to them under the U.S. Constitution, to enact their own GMO labeling laws, and block our right to know what is in the food we consume. This stacks up right next to the numerous examples of governmental abuse of power and arrogance.

Large agribusiness companies should not be granted special legal privileges, obviously based upon their campaign contributions to State and Congressional legislators. But remember, the Farm bill fight is not over. If and when these bills are passed, and conferees are appointed, this small group of Congressional members will be targeted by the NHF to block these Monsanto obstructions. Avoiding accountability and putting financial greed ahead of public health and safety is simply unacceptable.

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