

VOTE AGAINST BILL C-287 AND SUPPORT CANADA'S AGRI-FOOD BUSINESS

Task Force on Foods from Biotechnology
Groupe de travail sur les aliments issus de la biotechnologie

Food and Consumer Products Manufacturers of Canada
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers
Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Support Canada's agri-food business.

The Task Force on Foods from Biotechnology in Canada represents Canada's agri-food industry from the farm through to consumers. Our members are the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Food and Consumer Products Manufacturers of Canada, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers.

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BILL C-287 IS UNWORKABLE FOR CANADA'S AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Charles Caccia's Bill C-287 is an amendment to the *Food and Drugs Act*, which would require mandatory labelling of all foods derived from biotechnology - foods that have been proven by Canada's regulators to carry no health or environmental concerns. All foods from biotechnology undergo a rigorous 10-year regulatory approval process, which includes research and development, field trial evaluation, and registration and marketing. Today, 51 types of genetic modification in nine crops, including corn, canola and soybean, have been approved for food use in Canada.

A VOTE FOR BILL C-287 MEANS:

- A vote of no confidence in our world-class regulatory agencies (Health Canada and CFIA).
- Mandatory labels on ALL food products containing GM ingredients, estimated at 60-70% of products currently on store shelves, despite the fact they have undergone a rigorous approval process.
- An unenforceable labelling system because neither the science nor processes currently exist to measure a 1% threshold consistently and accurately.
- Consumer fear and confusion, and ultimately removal of choice from the marketplace, since 40% of Canadian consumers see labels as a warning instead of as a source of information. ②
- 55% of Canadian consumers indicate they would be less likely to buy foods labelled as containing GM ingredients. ②
- Manufacturers would be forced to reformulate food products with non-GM ingredients, as they have done in other countries.
- Food companies would have to source raw materials outside the country because the Canadian agricultural system cannot supply GM-free ingredients, leading to loss of market access for Canadian farmers.
- Significant trade implications - the majority of Canadian global exports (73%) and imports (62%) are with the U.S. ③ Similar to Canada, the U.S. requires mandatory labelling for health and safety only.
- A testing and enforcement regime that would need to be established at considerable cost to the public.
- Decrease in biotechnology investment leading to loss of beneficial gene technology and life sciences agenda for Canada.

A VOTE AGAINST BILL C-287 MEANS:

- Endorsement of Canada's *Food and Drugs Act*, which already requires mandatory labelling for health and safety reasons (e.g. potential allergens).
- Confidence in our federal regulators who have determined that all approved products of biotechnology currently on the market carry no health or environmental concerns.
- Recognition that Canada has one of the most effective food safety systems in the world.
- Support for development of a draft labelling standard currently being produced by the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) and over 60 stakeholder groups to provide more information to consumers.
- Labelling that is informative, understandable, not false, not misleading and verifiable (as developed by CGSB).
- Ensure Canadian food industry will continue to use 45% of Canadian farm outputs. ③
- A labelling standard tied to health and safety, which will not disrupt cross-border trade.
- Keep beneficial gene technology, which 60% of consumers agree will allow the development of crops that can be more nutritious and may improve human health in the future. ②
- Continue to reap environmental benefits such as reductions in chemical pesticide use and increased yields on the same amount of land.
- Ensure food companies continue their ongoing dialogue with consumers about manufacturing processes, including the use of GM ingredients, via toll-free numbers and web sites.

② Source: Ipsos-Reid, September 2001

③ Source: Statistics Canada

Take me with you. Vote against Bill C-287 and support...

- **CONSUMERS** by ensuring they have access to food labels that are informative, understandable, not false, not misleading and verifiable, and benefit from an ongoing dialogue about foods from biotechnology and our food regulatory system.
- **OUR FEDERAL REGULATORS** who have created one of the most effective food safety systems in the world and have already implemented a mandatory labelling system for health and safety reasons.
- **CANADA'S AGRI-FOOD BUSINESS** by ensuring it continues to use 45% of Canadian farm outputs and continues to trade with the U.S. (73% of global exports and 62% of global imports).
- **CGSB PROCESS** which has developed a draft labelling standard in cooperation with all stakeholders from government to farmers to consumers.

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