

Consumers Association of Canada withdraws from Voluntary Labelling Charade

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CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION WITHDRAWS FROM NATIONAL LABELLING COMMITTEE FOR GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS CITING NEED FOR MANDATORY LABELLING

OTTAWA - The Consumers' Association of Canada has withdrawn from the Canadian General Standards Board's committee which is working on setting a "Standard for Voluntary Labelling..." of genetically engineered foods, citing concerns over the development of a weak voluntary standard that does not adequately represent consumer concerns.

"Canadian consumers deserve to know whether or not their food contains genetically modified foods and they deserve a strong mandatory standard that holds industry accountable," said Mel Fruitman, President of the Consumers' Association of Canada. "The committee has been developing a voluntary standard that may satisfy industry, but does not meet the needs of consumers."

Recent public opinion polls indicate 95 percent of Canadian consumers demand labelling.

"Canadian consumers are clear - they want labelling of genetically modified foods. They deserve the right to make an informed choice. The only way that is going to happen is if there is a mandatory standard", notes Fruitman.

In addition to concerns over the voluntary nature of the standard, the Association objects to the weakness of the standard. For example, the standard developed by the committee allows up to five percent of the food to be genetically "engineered" and still be considered non-GM. The European Union standard is 1 percent. Other provisions would allow delaying of labelling for years.

"Even if the labels were to be made mandatory the standard has holes big enough to drive a truck through," said Fruitman.

"We felt continued participation in a committee that has developed a standard that does not reflect consumers' needs is a mistake," said Fruitman.

"We made our best effort to ensure the committee developed a standard that responded to consumers' concerns. Unfortunately, the result has been a weak, voluntary standard."