

# Labeling

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Sharratt<info@cban.ca><p><b>Summary:</b> There is no mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods in Canada, despite intensive campaigning and 10 years of polling that show over 80% of Canadians want these labels. Instead, a national standard for voluntary labeling was established - but this is voluntary and no company has yet labeled their products as containing GE ingredients! At least 40 countries around the world have labeling laws including Europe, China and Russia.</p><a name="eztoc1498\_1" id="eztoc1498\_1"></a><h2>Consumer rights victory as US sends opposition to GM labeling agreement</h2><p><b>July 5, 2011</b></p><ul><li>Twenty year struggle with global food safety body ends with? consumer rights milestone?</li><li>Move clears way for greater monitoring of the effects of GM organisms</li></ul><p>Canada was an obstacle to the labeling guidelines until public pressure changed our government's position. Thank to your action and years of work (16!) with many groups around the world, there are international guidelines on GM labeling.</p><p>More than 100 countries agreed on long overdue guidance on the labeling of genetically modified (GM) food. The Codex Alimentarius Commission of the UN, made up of the world's food safety regulatory agencies, has been labouring for two decades to come up with consensus guidance. In a striking reversal of their previous position during the annual Codex summit in Geneva, the US delegation dropped its opposition to the GM labelling guidance document, allowing it to move forward and become an official Codex text. The new Codex agreement means that any country wishing to adopt GM food labelling will no longer face the threat of a legal challenge from the World Trade Organization (WTO). This is because national measures based on Codex guidance or standards cannot be challenged as a barrier to trade. This will have immediate implications for consumers.<a href="http://www.consumersinternational.org/news-and-media/news/2011/07/gm-labelling-victory-as-us-ends-opposition" target="\_self">Click here for analysis from Consumers International.</a></p><p>The United Nation's Codex guidelines on GM food labelling are voluntary and so the guidelines themselves do not compel countries to label (so this will not result in labelling in Canada for example).</p><a name="eztoc1498\_2" id="eztoc1498\_2"></a><h2>Your Actions Worked! UN Codex Provides For Labeling</h2><p><b>May 11, 2010:</b> Thank to your letters, the Canadian government delegation to the UN Codex meeting last week did not support the U.S. position against GM food labeling. The U.S. failed in their attempt to stop the negotiations.</p><div class="object-right"><div class="content-view-embedded-media"><div class="class-image"><div class="attribute-image"><p><a href="/donate" target="\_self"></a></p></div></div></div></div><p>The Canadian government did not speak up to support the nonsensical position from the U.S. that GM foods are no different from foods produced through conventional methods. Though not yet actively supporting a positive position on GM labeling, Canada did not obstruct the meeting and the U.S. was not able to put an end to the negotiations. Out of the over 50 countries at the negotiations, the U.S. was only supported in its position by Mexico, Costa Rica, and Argentina. The U.S. was trying to put an end to the UN Codex negotiations on GM labeling but the negotiations will continue.</p><p><b>May 10, 2010, Consumers Union Press Release:</b><a href="http://www.consumersunion.org/pub/core\_food\_safety/016389.html" target="\_self">U.S. Stands Nearly Alone in Opposition at Recent International Meeting</a></p><p><b>April 30, 2010 - Press Release:</b><a href="/Press/Press-Releases/Canada-to-oppose-the-right-of-countries-to-label-GM-foods" target="\_self">Canada to oppose the right of countries to label GM foods?</a> <i>Regroupement québécois contre les OGM (RQc OGM), Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN)</i></p><p><b>April 30, 2010 - Read</b><a href="/Resources/Topics/Labeling/Letter-from-CBAN-to-Minister-of-Health-on-Codex-GM-labeling-April-30" target="\_self">CBAN's letter to the Minister of Health</a> <a href="/Resources/Topics/Labeling/Letter-from-CBAN-to-Minister-of-Health-on-Codex-GM-labeling-April-30" id="\_\_mce\_tmp" target="\_self"></a></p><p>Developing countries want support from Codex for the right to label GM foods. The US and Canada want to make sure this doesn't happen because Codex recommendations on GM labeling could protect developing countries from challenges at the World Trade Organization. Developing countries are pressing for recommendations on GE labeling from Codex to assist their efforts to provide information to consumers.</p><a name="eztoc1498\_3" id="eztoc1498\_3"></a><h2>What is Codex?</h2><p>Codex Alimentarius means? food code?. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a UN process established in the 1960s by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization. Through Codex, national governments meet to negotiate and harmonize guideline

for food safety assessments and other standards including food labeling. **Codex guidelines are voluntary and non-binding** but are an international reference point for countries. Codex standards are now the benchmarks against which national food measures and regulations are evaluated in the event of traded disputes brought forward by countries through the World Trade Organization.

Consumer organizations are able to register to participate in Codex meetings and can also submit written comments for consideration. [Click here to go to the Codex website.](http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/index_en.jsp)

**May 5, 2009:** [Canada Must Support UN Negotiations on Labeling of Genetically Modified Foods:](http://www.cban.ca/Press/Press-Releases/Canada-Must-Support-UN-Negotiations-on-Labeling-of-Genetically-Modified-Foods) Codex meeting in Calgary could suspend work on GM food labeling. **Update:** Despite US and Canadian objections, the Codex meeting agreed to continue their work to develop guidelines for labeling GM foods.

**2008: Private Members Bill defeated:** A Private Members Bill to label genetically engineered foods (C-517) introduced by Gilles-A. Perron of Bloc Québécois was defeated in the House of Commons in April 2008.

- [Click here to listen to the April 2008 House of Commons debate](http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/) courtesy of Deconstructing Dinner.
- [Click here to read the transcript of the debate](/Resources/Topics/Labeling/Transcript-from-House-of-Commons-debate-on-Bill-517-to-label-GE-foods-April-3-2008)
- [Click here to read April 3, 2008 Press Release:](/Press/Press-Releases/Bill-to-Label-Genetically-Engineered-Foods) Bill to Label Genetically Engineered Foods: Will MPs vote for Monsanto or Canada?
- [Communiqué: Projet de loi fédérale sur l'étiquetage des OGM: Entrevotez pour Monsanto ou pour nous, le choix est clair](/Resources/Topics/Labeling/Projet-de-loi-federale-sur-l-etiquetage-des-OGM)