



**SNACK FOOD  
ASSOCIATION**

*An International Trade Association*

## **Questions for the Record - Tom Dempsey, Snack Food Association**

*Submitted January 26, 2015*

Rep. Morgan Griffith:

*Please provide your thoughts, suggestions, and feedback on Mr. Pompeo's bill, HR 4432 from the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.*

First, I would like to again thank the Subcommittee for providing a forum for a balanced review of one of the most critical issues facing the food industry today, the labeling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

My past role as president of one of the largest privately owned snack brands in the United States provides me with firsthand experience about what mandatory GMO labeling would mean for the food industry. It would impact nearly every aspect of SFA members' business, upping costs by requiring increased product inventory, added complexity for packaging and distribution processes, and extensive new regulatory and training requirements.

SFA does not have a single member company that manufactures, distributes, and sells in just one state, which makes complying with a patchwork of state labeling laws such as Vermont's incredibly complex. As I mentioned during my testimony, the hardest hit by these new burdens would be the small, family-owned companies with just one plant or just a single line of production. Quite frankly, these costs could put some companies out of business and thereby increase consolidation in the industry.

A patchwork of mandatory labeling laws would also confuse consumers and add unnecessary costs at the grocery store. Additionally, some food manufacturers may be forced to end the distribution of their products in states that require mandatory GMO labeling. This would have a ripple effect across the distribution chain, impacting drivers, warehouse personnel, account executives, and field management. And while consumers in some states, such as Vermont, may have the option to cross state lines to shop for goods if products were pulled from grocery shelves, as you correctly pointed out during the hearing that is simply not feasible for everyone.

For all of these reasons, I would also like to thank Rep. Pompeo for his leadership in crafting legislation that represents a dramatic step in the right direction to address the problems with mandatory GMO labeling. SFA's members appreciate that H.R. 4432 balances the desire of some consumers for an additional label with the recognition that mandatory labels should be reserved for safety and nutrition concerns. This is especially important given that all of the panelists at the Subcommittee's hearing agreed that the safety of GMO products is not a concern. The safety of GMOs is backed by FDA, USDA, EPA and 20 years of experience in the field.

While we firmly believe the science shows that GMO products are safe, SFA members are dedicated to providing consumers with options in the marketplace. We agree with you that a national standard for GMO labeling— rather than a state-by-state patchwork of arbitrary rules – is the best approach. While the potential to confuse consumers about the safety of a product with a mandatory GMO label is too great, we would appreciate the opportunity to continue the conversation about a structured voluntary labeling system. We believe that a voluntary labeling program similar to that used by USDA's National Organic Program is the best way to create a meaningful label that will help consumers make educated choices.

We also believe that the term “natural” needs FDA attention and a formal definition. Our manufacturers continue to be subject to numerous lawsuits as it relates to labeling our products as “natural”. This definition should not be left up to the courts. Regardless of a legal decision, the litigation process is costly and time consuming and ultimately will drive up product costs for consumers.

Again, thank you for your consideration of our views. We hope this lays the groundwork for a federal solution to the threat of a costly and confusing patchwork of state labeling rules. SFA would be happy to be a resource should you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Dempsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Tom Dempsey  
Snack Food Association  
President and CEO