Opening Statement
Health Subcommittee Hearing: "A National Framework for the Review and Labeling of Biotechnology in Food"
Rep. Gene Green
June 18, 2015

Good morning and thank you all for being here today.

Genetically Modified Organisms, or GMO's first hit the market around 20 years ago and in the years since, have only expanded in prevalence. Nowadays, most corn, sugar beets, canola and cotton crops grown in the U.S. are genetically modified.

Today, as we debate whether there is a need for a national framework for the labeling of GMO ingredients, I feel it is important to first talk about the safety and science of genetically modified organisms.

The FDA has conducted evaluation after evaluation on GMO's through their voluntary consultation process, and consistently found no material difference between the GMO and their non-modified counterparts. Moreover, there have not been any cases where FDA found that a genetically modified organism was unsafe for consumption.

Genetically Modified food is not only safe for consumption, but has a positive environmental impact. A comprehensive study by the National Academy of Sciences found that GMO's have significantly increased crop yields while decreasing pesticide use and soil erosion.

The benefits of GMO's are not limited to environmental stewardship. Norman Borlaug, the father of the "Green Revolution" and recipient of the Noble Peace Prize is credited

with saving a billion lives through his creation of Dwarf Wheat, a genetically modified plant that doubled the crop yield in Pakistan and India, dramatically improving food security in those countries.

Even today, Golden Rice, a crop containing biosynthesized beta-carotene (Beta KAROTEEN) is essential in combatting Vitamin A deficiency in Asia. This GMO crop is credited with saving the lives of 670,000 children under the age of 5 every year. At this point, it has clearly been demonstrated that GMO technology is not only safe, but of immense benefit to society.

Most analysts estimate that 80% of packed foods in the U.S. contain genetically modified ingredients or plants. When it comes to mandatory labeling, food labels should impart useful, scientifically-sound information to consumers. With that

said, consumers who want to know the origin and process of their food should have access to that information through a voluntary and certified GMO-Free label that they can be confident in. I feel that H.R. 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act moves us towards that goal.

At the same time, any proposed legislation that preempts existing State Law must be considered with careful scrutiny. Congress must have a compelling reason to create a national standard. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on the proposed legislation, science of genetically modified food, and perspectives on the current state-by-state patchwork.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back.