

# Just Label It

*Co-ops support consumers' right to know*

BY ALLIE MENTZER

In honor of Non-GMO month this October, National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) is partnering with manufacturers to contribute a minimum of \$75,000 to the Just Label It (JLI) campaign. JLI is a national coalition of more than 650 organizations dedicated to bringing about mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods. NCGA has been a funding sponsor of JLI since the organization's founding in 2011.

In addition to its monetary contribution, NCGA is educating consumers about JLI via the Co+op Deals promotional flyer. This Co+op Deals cause promotion reinforces NCGA's ongoing efforts to advocate for food co-ops and consumers' right to know what is in their food.

## The right to an informed choice

Surveys consistently show that over 90 percent of Americans want mandatory labeling on foods containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms). GMO labeling is mandatory in much of the world already. In fact, as JLI points out, 64 nations—from Brazil to New Zealand, plus the entire European Union—already require labeling to inform their citizens about the presence of GMOs.

GMOs are plants or animals created through the process of genetic engineering. Typically, this technology inserts DNA from one species into a different species. The resulting GMOs are combinations of plant, animal, bacterial, and viral genes that cannot occur in nature or be created by traditional breeding.

Over the past two decades, GMOs have been entering U.S. grocery stores at an increasing rate. While certified-organic foods are prohibited from containing GMOs, the Congressional Research Service estimates that 60–70 percent of processed conventional foods contain GMO ingredients, and none of these ingredients has been tested for safety by the FDA.

NCGA supports mandatory labeling



of genetically engineered foods because we believe our shoppers have the right to information that assists them in making their own purchasing decisions. Whether individuals choose to eat genetically engineered foods or not, everyone has the right to know what's in the food they're eating and feeding their families.

## Cause promotions build awareness

NCGA cause promotions provide education about and/or raise funds to address issues tied to NCGA advocacy guidelines. In choosing JLI as our donation recipient for the October cause promotion, NCGA is building upon concurrent, industry-wide Non-GMO month activities. The goal is to foster awareness of GMOs and the JLI campaign among co-op consumers, demonstrating NCGA's commitment as an industry leader

in the right-to-know movement.

NCGA vendor partners for the JLI cause promotion are Spectrum, DREAM, Garden of Eatin', Silk, Endangered Species Chocolate, Harvest Bay, Manitoba Harvest, Wholesome Sweeteners, Organic Valley,

and Nature's Path. Together, we're supporting JLI's research to show that mandatory labeling will not increase food costs; efforts to educate lawmakers and the media about GMO labeling; and outreach to make more people aware of an important labeling petition to the FDA.

The Co+op Deals JLI cause promotion is supported by a variety of educational and POS materials. NCGA member and associate member co-ops have access to JLI-themed posters, shelf-talkers, newsletter copy, staff FAQs, and suggested social media content.

Momentum for mandatory labeling is building. More than 1.2 million people have signed JLI's petition to the FDA already—more than any other food petition in FDA history. Through NCGA's collaboration with Just Label It, food co-ops are an integral part of the GMO labeling movement, reinforcing food co-ops' strong legacy of championing consumer rights. ■



Dark blue indicates nations that require GMO labeling. Map content adapted from the Center for Food Safety.