



Consumers' Association of Canada
Association des consommateurs du Canada

PRESS RELEASE

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Consumers Want Mandatory Labelling of Genetically Modified Foods

CALGARY, Dec. 3 /CNW/ - "Consumers have the right to know what's in their food and they overwhelmingly want the Federal Government to mandate labeling of genetically modified foods," said Mr. Bruce Cran, President of the Consumers' Association of Canada.

Today, the Consumers' Association of Canada released the results of its national poll on the labelling of genetically modified foods. The poll conducted in October 2003 by Decima Research surveyed 2000 people across Canada. The poll results are accurate within a range of +/- 2%.

"Full disclosure of food ingredients is what consumers want so that they can make informed decisions," said Ms. Peggy Kirkeby, Vice President, Issues and Policy of the Consumers' Association. "Today, mandatory labels on food products tell consumers how much salt, fat, cholesterol and carbohydrates are in a particular product. Yet, when it comes to genetically modified ingredients, the Federal Government has said no, they aren't going to give this information to Canadian consumers."

Consumers clearly believe that the Federal Government has failed in its job in providing Canadians with adequate information about genetically modified foods. "When the poll asked if the Government of Canada has provided adequate information about genetically modified foods 80% of Canadians said no," said Ms. Kirkeby.

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The second finding in the poll showed that 91% of Canadians want labels on foods that contain genetically modified ingredients. "There is no doubt that Canadians want information about what is in their food," said Ms. Kirkeby. "A label is a simple way to provide this information."

"It is very rare to get Canadians to overwhelmingly agree on a single issue, but the mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods is such an issue," said Ms. Kirkeby. The poll found that consumers want the government to make these labels mandatory rather than having a voluntary system controlled by industry. "The poll found that 88% of consumers want the Federal Government to make labelling of genetically modified foods mandatory," said Ms. Kirkeby. The poll also showed that consumers' views were the same irrespective of factors such as income, gender, region or education level. "It is clear that consumers simply just don't trust the food industry to voluntarily provide the necessary information."

This issue also cuts across political lines with politicians from all parties having supported private members bills in Parliament on mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods. Prominent Members of Parliament such as Joe Clark (Progressive Conservative), Deborah Grey (Canadian Alliance), Steven Owen (Liberal) and Gilles Duceppe (Bloc Quebecois) all have supported mandatory labelling. "There will be a new Prime Minister and Liberal Government next week and Canadians are looking forward to fresh ideas," said Ms. Kirkeby. "On behalf of Canadian consumers the Consumers' Association will be formally asking the new Government to introduce legislation to mandate labelling of genetically modified foods."

"Voluntary systems just don't work and consumers don't trust them," said Ms. Kirkeby. "It's time for the Federal Government to stop stalling, listen to consumers and introduce mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods."

For further information:

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