LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

Sixty-third Legislature First Regular Session - 2015

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL NO. 6

BY AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND TO THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE STATE OF IDAHO IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

We, your Memorialists, the House of Representatives and the Senate of the State of Idaho assembled in the First Regular Session of the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, do hereby respectfully represent that:

WHEREAS, for purposes of this House Joint Memorial, the term "genetically engineered" (GE) is used; although the terms biogenetic organism (BIO), genetically modified organism (GMO) and genetically engineered (GE) are often used interchangeably; and

WHEREAS, foods produced with GE ingredients are as safe to eat and grow as foods produced without GE ingredients as found by many of the most influential regulatory agencies and organizations in the world that study the safety of food products, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, Health Canada, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Academy of Sciences, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the European Food Safety Authority; and

WHEREAS, GE technology adds desirable traits from nature, establishing the potential for nutritional, health, agronomic and environmental benefits; and

WHEREAS, genetic modification of crops has existed since man began cultivating crops for food and GE technology has been safely used to produce food products for the past 25 years; and

WHEREAS, roughly 70% to 80% of the foods consumed in the United States, both at home and away from home, contain GE ingredients or are genetically engineered as a whole product; and

WHEREAS, GE crops are produced on a sustainable basis, using less water, providing more yield per acre, reducing carbon footprints and adapting rapidly to disease pressures for long-term sustainable production of an adequate, wholesome and economical food supply; and

WHEREAS, a patchwork of local and state mandatory labeling laws and regulations will force costly changes to manufacturing, labeling, warehousing, inventory and distribution channels. Manufacturers and retailers will have to make immediate and consequential changes to their businesses to comply with new labeling requirements. Testing to determine if products are exempt, relabeling or reformulating products with specially handled, higher-priced ingredients, and having separate production runs, state-specific tracking units (SKUs), segregated warehousing, trucking and other logistical complexities would all result in higher food prices; and

WHEREAS, a national solution is needed that will protect consumers by eliminating confusion and advancing food safety and that will allow for the free trade of commerce among the states; and

WHEREAS, a national solution will eliminate the confusion and uncertainty of a 50-state patchwork of GE safety and labeling laws and affirm the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as the nation's authority for the use and labeling of genetically modified food ingredients; and

WHEREAS, a national solution will require the FDA to conduct a safety review of all new GE traits before they are introduced into commerce. The FDA will be empowered to mandate the labeling of GE food ingredients if the agency determines there is a health, safety or nutrition issue with GE technology; and

WHEREAS, a national solution will inform consumers by the FDA establishing federal standards for companies that want to voluntarily label their product for the absence or presence of GE food ingredients so that consumers clearly understand their choices in the marketplace; and

WHEREAS, a national solution will provide consistency in that the FDA will define the term "natural" for its use on food and beverage products so that food and beverage companies and consumers have a consistent legal framework that will guide food labels and inform consumer choice.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular Session of the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives and the Senate concurring therein, that the Congress of the United States enact bipartisan legislation that reaffirms the FDA as the primary authority in uniform food labeling related to genetic engineering, based on scientific standards regarding health, safety and nutrition.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that existing FDA labeling rules and guidance, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program, provide sufficient standards to address consumer interest in food production practices through the use of truthful and non-misleading voluntary labeling.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commissioner of the FDA adopt policies, regulations and rules setting standards to address consumer interest in food production practices through voluntary labeling.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives be, and she is hereby authorized and directed to forward a copy of this Memorial to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Congress, the congressional delegation representing the State of Idaho in the Congress of the United States and to the Commissioner of the FDA.