



May 17, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Ranking Member Mikulski,

The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) urges you and all members of the Senate Appropriations Committee to support a national bioengineered food labeling legislative solution, which Senators Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) are currently crafting in the Senate Agriculture Committee, and to reject all efforts to establish unique labeling requirements for specific bioengineered food products, such as salmon, during consideration of the Fiscal Year 2017 spending bills.

In recent years, the Senate Appropriations Committee has adopted by voice vote amendments to require the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require a special food label for a bioengineered salmon product developed by AquaBounty Technologies, a small Massachusetts-based biotechnology company. As the world's leading biotechnology trade association, representing 1,000 companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers, and related organizations across the United States, BIO has regularly opposed requiring an FDA-sanctioned label for this particular salmon product, and for all bioengineered food. Sadly, history has shown that consumers will perceive a bioengineered food label sanctioned by the national food safety agency as a warning that conveys something is wrong with the food.

Science, of course, shows us that food produced using bioengineering is just as safe and nutritious as the same food produced using conventional breeding methods. The FDA has repeatedly reinforced its view that bioengineered food, including salmon, is as safe to eat as conventionally produced food and does not require a special label. In other words, the amendments that single out salmon for special labeling requirements are inconsistent with the FDA's own expert determinations and regulations. Imposing a statutory mandate that overrides the FDA's exercise of its scientific judgment on a product-by-product basis is risky and problematic, and undermines the FDA's well-deserved reputation as a guardian of food safety in the United States.

BIO continues to believe it is bad policy for the Congress to single out any food, including salmon, for a special FDA label based on factors other than science or safety and opposes Congress's requiring the FDA to mandate a special FDA label for salmon or other bioengineered food. We do, however, understand and embrace some consumers' curiosity about bioengineered food, which is why our organization is part of a sizable food value chain coalition made up of more than 800 organizations from every state seeking to establish a nationally consistent policy on disclosing information about bioengineered food.

The House of Representatives passed its version of national labeling uniformity legislation in July 2015 and the Senate Agriculture Committee is working right now to draft bipartisan legislation of its own. The likely Senate bill would require the U.S. Department of

Agriculture (USDA) to establish national bioengineered food disclosure standards through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Labeling food ingredients relative to the absence or presence of bioengineering is a marketing issue unrelated to food safety, which is why BIO agrees strongly with the Senate Agriculture Committee's approach to solving the labeling challenge.

BIO asks the Senate Appropriations Committee to reject all attempts to malign agricultural and food biotechnology applications, generally, and to specifically oppose amendments that would single out specific products for new FDA labeling mandates that the agency has itself rejected as not science-based, unnecessary, and even misleading. We hope you will instead work with Senators Roberts and Stabenow to support legislation that will give consumers more information about bioengineered food broadly.

I appreciate your attention to this important innovation policy issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone on the BIO team if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Greenwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the beginning.

James C. Greenwood
President and CEO