

GMO in the Aisles: Talking Points

The following points are intended to address the most likely questions that consumers may have about GMO foods in the supermarket. They are organized by department.

Produce Department

- **All GMO crops (including corn, soybean, and sugar beets as well as others) have been evaluated by the USDA, FDA and EPA and other scientific organizations and found to be safe and healthy for people and animals to eat.**
- Nearly all fresh fruits and vegetables are non-GMO. While many GMO food products are approved – including alfalfa, canola, chicory, corn, cotton, flax, melon, papaya, plum, potato, rice, roses, soybean, squash, sugar beets, tomatoes and wheat – not all are in the marketplace. The most likely GMO products in the produce section include sweet corn, papaya, summer squash, and zucchini.
- While some sources will point you to the PLU (Price Look-Up) codes beginning with “8” as a means of confirming GMO products, the use of PLU codes is optional, not regulated and is not utilized by local growers, so is not a reliable means of identifying GMO products.
- Organic produce has Price Look Up (PLU) codes that begin with “9” and is non-GMO, but it is preferable to look for the certified organic label.
- Genetic engineering (GMO) is offering solutions to valued products – bananas, Florida citrus and Hawaiian papaya - that are being threatened by fungal diseases and viruses. Biotechnology is developing strains of the fruit(s) resistant to the threatening pathogen and in many cases eliminating or greatly reducing the use of fungicides and insecticides. Of these, only GMO papaya is currently found in the marketplace.

Meat Department:

- **All GMO crops (including corn, soybean, and sugar beets as well as others) have been evaluated by the USDA, FDA and EPA and other scientific organizations and found to be safe and healthy for people and animals to eat.**
- Meat and poultry livestock are not GMO. Although most animals are fed with GMO ingredients including corn and soybeans, there is no evidence that eating ingredients from GMO plants affects animals’ meat or milk.
- Organic meat and poultry is non-GMO and is from animals that are fed animal feed that does not contain ingredients from GMO plants.

Bakery Department:

- **All GMO crops (including corn, soybean, and sugar beets as well as others) have been evaluated by the USDA, FDA and EPA and other scientific organizations and found to be safe and healthy for people and animals to eat.**
- Most wheat and wheat flour is non-GMO. While approved as a GMO product, GMO wheat is not in current commercial production for the marketplace.
- Gluten is a protein found in most wheat products - exception is wheat starch, processed to remove the gluten. Most wheat is non-GMO.
- Canola and soybean oil, corn syrup and other sugars are often derived from GMO crops, but may contain very little if any identifiable protein.
- Canola and soybean oil, corn syrup and other sugars are often derived from GMO crops, but as food ingredients, these contain very few, if any, identifiable proteins that could be recognized as GMO.

Dairy Department:

- **All GMO crops (including corn, soybean, and sugar beets as well as others) have been evaluated by the USDA, FDA and EPA and other scientific organizations and found to be safe and healthy for people and animals to eat.**
- Egg-laying chickens are fed GMO corn. There is no evidence that this affects their eggs.
- Dairy cows are fed ingredients from GMO plants (corn, soybean, alfalfa). There is no evidence that this affects their milk.
- Most cheese from the USA is made with GMO-produced rennet, a complex of enzymes necessary to help milk coagulate.
- Organic milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and eggs are produced from cows and chickens that are not fed ingredients from GMO plants. Nor are the animals treated with rBST, a GMO hormone that enhances milk production. Organic cheeses are made using non-GMO rennet.
- Organic soymilk is made from soybeans that are non-GMO.

Center Aisles: Snacks, Crackers, Cereals, Canned Fruits and Vegetables, Frozen Fruits and Vegetables, etc.

- **All GMO crops (including corn, soybean, and sugar beets as well as others) have been evaluated by the USDA, FDA and EPA and other scientific organizations and found to be safe and healthy for people and animals to eat.**
- Many packaged products contain ingredients made from GMO plants, such as sugar beets, corn, or soybean. At the food ingredient level, GMO products are indistinguishable from non-GMO, as the identifying elements are small portions of the proteins present.
- Soybean and canola oil contain only trace amounts of DNA or protein -GMO or otherwise - but are produced from crops grown from GMO seeds.
- Sugar is made from sugar beets, a GMO crop. Sugar may contain trace amounts protein - necessary to identify as GMO or non-GMO.
- High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) is a sweetener made from corn, a GMO crop. HFCS may contain trace amounts of DNA and protein (GMO or non-GMO).
- Fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned, frozen, or dried) are nearly all non-GMO. Only corn, papaya, summer squash, and zucchini may be GMO.
- All wheat-based ingredients, such as flour and cracked wheat, are non-GMO.
- Many product additives including proteins, fibers, enzymes, dough conditioners, emulsifiers, yeast and vitamins are produced from GMOs.
- All popcorn is non GMO. Popcorn seed has not been genetically modified.