

FMI Board Policy Statement on Biotechnology and Gene Editing *(Board adopted on January 26, 2019)*

Food Marketing Institute (FMI) member companies respect and seek to support their customers in the quest to make informed food choices that align with their beliefs, values and needs. As part of these efforts, the retail food industry relies on U.S. Government food regulatory agencies to establish food safety standards, conduct necessary inspections, and maintain strong and clear enforcement programs to ensure compliance. This is true for all foods sold in the food retail industry, including bioengineered products.

Food production methods continue to advance, becoming more technologically sophisticated. Food retailers must collaborate with other members of the supply chain, regulators and civil society to ensure communication with consumers also evolves to reflect these innovations and to demonstrate respect for our customers' values related to food.

Advancements in gene editing (also known as genome editing) enable precise alterations to be made to the genetic sequences in both plants and animals. Gene editing technology has the potential to address numerous societal health needs and to overcome some global food production challenges. The public acceptance of such a powerful technology depends on a clear consumer understanding of gene editing's benefits, an open exchange about the technology's implications, and the availability of truthful and not misleading science-grounded information.

Regarding food (and medicines or supplements) produced with or containing ingredients produced using gene editing, Food Marketing Institute believes:

- The government agencies responsible for ensuring the safety of our nation's food and pharmaceutical supply should be pro-active in promoting the value of gene editing technology and sharing science-based information to assure the public of the testing and scientific review genetically edited ingredients in food and pharmaceutical products have undergone;
- To minimize unnecessary consumer confusion and concern, the biotechnology community should collaborate with government agencies to establish a standard vocabulary the public can understand regarding the various bioengineering techniques in use, including gene editing; and
- A public facing educational campaign that provides consumers with ready access to information they can trust regarding gene editing is needed, and such a campaign will be most effective if undertaken as a cooperative effort among the agricultural, retail and manufacturing sectors of the food industry, the government, and scientific, medical, environmental and consumer advocacy communities.