



Kucinich Bills Would Control GMOs: Good Intent, Bad Policy

On a positive note, the bills do draw attention to the dangers of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which, according to [Natural Health Strategies](#), have been linked to toxins, allergies, infertility, immune dysfunction, stunted growth, and even infant and adult deaths.

According to Wikipedia, a genetically modified organism (GMO) is "any organism whose DNA has been modified by human intervention.... Researchers now define genetically-engineered organisms (GEOs) as those that are produced from a range of recombinant DNA technologies, which introduce a transgene into the genome of a host cell."



Europe eliminated GMOs from the food supply 10 years ago; however, Americans are consuming a vast array of these products, more often than not without knowing it. According to Natural Health Strategies, 75 percent of foods in the grocery stores contain genetically modified ingredients. And Americans cannot avoid these GMOs because there are no labeling requirements in the United States. That is where Kucinich's bills come in.

House Bill 3553, entitled The GE Food Right to Know Act, part of a package of bills introduced by Kucinich, would require companies to label genetically engineered foods. H.R. 3554, the Genetically Engineered Safety Act, is touted to prevent the biological contamination of the food supply. *The Examiner* [reports](#),

[The bill] would ... establish a tracking system to regulate the growing, handling, transportation, and disposal of pharmaceutical and industrial crops, and protect native ecosystems and traditional farms from the unstudied dangers of growing GE organisms.

Kucinich has also introduced The Genetically Engineered Technology Farmer Protection Act, H.R. 6637, which is aimed at protecting farmers who may be sued by biotech companies for alleged patent infringement. NaturalNews.com explains the need for this legislation:

When GMO seeds or pollen drift into nearby fields, for instance, current laws have actually allowed biotechnology companies to sue farmers for allegedly violating intellectual property rights. All this will change with H.R. 6637, as biotechnology companies will become fully responsible for any negative impacts caused by their products, including incidents of contamination.

Kucinich announced his bills in an emphatic declaration regarding food safety:

We must take steps to prevent genetically engineered organisms from being grown in a way that



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could do irreversible damage to our food supply. Under pressure from profit-minded industry, we have already allowed the spread of genetically modified crops into our agriculture at great cost to our economy and with unknown effects on our bodies.

Many Americans are unaware that crops that are genetically engineered to produce experimental pharmaceutical drugs are being grown in this country in the open, allowing them to contaminate conventional crops without detection. We cannot rely on industry to prevent the unintended spread of genetically engineered organisms. We have taken few steps to ensure that our own genetic experiments are kept in check. This commonsense legislation would simply ensure that our experimentation with genetic engineering and cloning do not disrupt our traditional food supply. When you are talking about the safety and stability of the food supply, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Kucinich criticized the Department of Agriculture for permitting over 300 outdoor field trials of plants, including products such as corn, sugarcane, tomatoes, and wheat to be genetically engineered to produce experimental pharmaceuticals, industrial enzymes, and novel proteins. Those items were not intended to be used in food or for the environment.

The Examiner writes, “The potential for significant contamination introduces the possibility of enormously destructive consequences.”

The irony is that supporters of GMOs originally claimed that they would increase crop yields, and would reduce both the costs for farmers and the necessity for herbicides. But the use of GMOs has proven to have exactly the opposite effects.

Jeffrey M. Smith, author of *Seeds of Deception, and Genetic Roulette*, asserts that genetically modified (GM) soy has decreased yields by nearly 20 percent compared with non-GM soy, and failures of GM cotton have been as high as 100 percent in some cases.

Likewise, the use of GMOs has resulted in cost increases to farmers. Smith explains that “terminator technology” — which creates seeds that self-destruct — forces farmers to purchase more of the same seeds each year, instead of using the seeds from their harvest in the following year. As noted by Smith, this situation also results in larger profits for the food companies which patent GM seeds. Those seeds could pose threats to the food supply because the sterile seeds may spread to nearby fields.

Meanwhile, there has been no reduction in the use of pesticide. In fact, data from the USDA reveal that the rise of GM crops in the United States increased pesticide use by 50 million pounds from 1996 to 2003. Smith pointed out that Roundup herbicide, which is said to be poisonous to frogs as well as placental and embryonic cells, has been used on 80 percent of GM crops around the world.

In other words, what was once offered as a solution to a problem has created yet more problems.

Still, not everyone agrees that the federal government can provide the proper solution to these issues. The Ludwig von Mises Institute's economics blog notes that the federal government has an agenda of its own that will benefit certain companies such as Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland, Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo., and Tyson through government decrees and regulations. The far better solution, the blog [states](#), is for the food industry to be permitted to operate in a true free market economy:

It's up to the consumer — whether the end decision is good, bad, or destructive. Additionally, the rest of us wouldn't be paying for the consequences of the bad decisions of others through the redistribution of income via the welfare state. With government out of the way, private interests



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would step in to audit, test, and certify food — as well as labels and ingredients — and make recommendations to consumers in for-profit endeavors. Consumers could then choose among these various for-profit (or philanthropic) private interests to assist them in making educated choices without interference from the many competing political interests that seek to control consumer perception, choice and access.

Of course, the best method is for individuals to be held accountable for their own choices and for their own bodies; however, the von Mises blog observes that individualism has been somewhat demonized in favor of collectivism — in turn creating in people a heavy reliance on the federal government to control every aspect of their lives. They have been conditioned to wait for approval from Washington before making decisions of their own.

And in the meantime, government solutions are creating brand new problems which the government will later be called on to solve — all without consideration of the fact that it was government interference which perpetrated the problems in the first place.

Photo: Rep. Dennis Kucinich



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