

Genetically Modified vs. non-Genetically Modified: GM vs. non-GM

Within recent years the food industry has experienced an increased awareness of genetically modified (GM) products. With this awareness emerged the need for greater understanding of the risks involved with GM products and the requirement for non-GMO certification. Additionally, commercial food manufacturers pursuing non-GMO certification faced increased challenges in sourcing non-GM ingredients.

What is the risk of GM ingredients? The most evident risk is confusion over the incongruous information offered regarding GM vs. non-GM. Neither USDA nor FDA has made claims for or against GM ingredients. In fact, FDA could not identify any material safety or compositional difference between GM crops and their conventional counterparts; FDA simply offers a clarification of the definition of GM as Genetically Engineered (GE).

The only risk proclaimed is that GM products are banned in more than 60 countries. Is the banning of GM the risk? No meaningful scientific studies have been offered to support the negative publicity surrounding GMO's.

What is the risk of non-GMO? One risk of non-GMO lies in the method of certification; specifically the use of third party agencies to make non-GMO determinations since these determinations are made only after full disclosure of confidential and proprietary information from suppliers. The extent of the risk of these disclosures may not be clear to all concerned. The risk for disclosure of this information beyond the contracted third party threatens the viability of intellectual property for all concerned. This is especially true when proprietary information is delegated to third party consultants that may not understand product uniqueness and intellectual property.

There is no mandate that a third party agency be used for non-GMO determination. Individually, food processors can research their product origins and ingredients to provide statements of non-GMO. We find it noteworthy that in discussions with USDA the National Seasoning Manufacturer's Association (NSMA) verified that any processor within the food industry can enact their own self-determination and certification of non-GMO by publishing their standards and exercising care and discipline in sourcing ingredients. As a result, individual members of NSMA have adopted the self-determination model.

In conclusion, there is no defined risk when using GM products and no mandated process for non-GMO certification. The use of third parties for certification carries the distinct risk of compromising intellectual property. Therefore, we remain committed to providing safe and wholesome products which meet all standards of food safety as required by law. We work diligently with suppliers to provide the requested non-GM products. Further, we support suppliers issuing "to the best of our knowledge" statements, based on their research and diligence. These statements are a reasonable and acceptable approach to the concept of separating and identifying non-GM from GM products. Upon request we provide all of our customers with our statement for non-GMO as "to the best of our knowledge" and support these statements with the same standards of food safety, risk and concern that we do all of our products.

April 10, 2014

Officers:

President – Tim Sonntag, Wixon Inc.
Vice President – Paul Kurpe, Elite Spice, Inc.
Secretary – Liz Morris, Elite Spice, Inc.
Treasurer/Executive Director – Richard Alsmeyer, PhD

Directors:

David Lessans, Chesapeake Spice Co.
Rodney Schaffer, Con Yeager Spice Co.
Greg Gamble, Foran Spice Co., Inc.

Jean Theiss, Newly Weds Foods
Jennifer Bencz, R.L. Schreiber, Inc.
Steve Markus, Sterigenics