LABELING OF FOODS MADE FROM GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED (GE) ORGANISMS

Rationale:

Food labels convey important information about the characteristics of the food. This information should be clear, concise and meaningful in informing consumers.

Currently in the U.S.:

- Food labels cannot be false or misleading and they must describe the basic nature of the food (e.g. apple juice).
- Voluntary labeling (e.g. kosher, organic) is allowed if it is not false or misleading.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cannot require labels to include information about production methods that do not cause material differences in the product.
- Mandatory labels would be required if:
  - A food from a GE organism were so different that the common or usual name would no longer adequately describe the new food;
  - The food would need to be used in a different way;
  - An issue would exist regarding the consequences of its use;
  - It had a significantly different nutritional property;
  - It included an allergen unexpected based on the name of the food.
- The FDA has not found that foods from GE organisms, as a class, differ materially in safety, nutritional value, organoleptic properties, or functional characteristics from foods from non-GE organisms.
- In 2012, two-thirds of consumers said they support the FDA’s current labeling policy for foods from GE organisms, and 76 percent say they cannot think of anything additional they would like to see on food labels. Of the 24 percent who want more detail, only 3 percent (1 percent of the total sample) cited a need for process-based labeling of food from GE organisms.

Scientific evidence supports the safety of foods derived from GE organisms. Major scientific bodies and regulatory agencies throughout the world have reviewed the underlying research and openly declared biotechnology and the foods currently available for sale to be safe.

Policy Statement:

**FASS supports the principle that mandatory food labeling should be reserved for information that describes material characteristics of a product.**

Policy objectives:

- FASS supports food labeling that is clear, concise and meaningful in informing consumers.
- FASS supports the continued use of voluntary process-based labeling to provide consumer choice in the marketplace.

References:

1. [http://www.fda.gov/food/guidancecomplianceandregulatoryinformation/guidancedocuments/foodlabelingnutrition/ucm059098.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/guidancecomplianceandregulatoryinformation/guidancedocuments/foodlabelingnutrition/ucm059098.htm)

*Adopted by the FASS Board of Directors on January 14, 2014*