July 16, 2015

Dear Representative,

Food & Water Watch urges you to vote against HR 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act sponsored by Representative Pompeo. By making voluntary labeling for genetically engineered (GMO) foods the national standard, this bill would enshrine in federal law a failed policy that has kept consumers in the dark about what they are eating for two decades. This bill would strip away consumers’ right to know by preempting state efforts to require labeling of GMO foods, as well as blocking other local and state initiatives to address environmental concerns by regulating GMO cultivation.

The bill relies on a system of voluntary labeling, despite the fact that for over a decade the FDA has allowed companies to voluntarily label GMO foods and none have chosen to do so. Americans want mandatory labeling of GMO foods. A 2013 New York Times poll found that 93 percent of respondents were in favor of a mandatory label for genetically engineered food. Since the Food and Drug Administration has failed to respond to the more than a million Americans who have asked the agency to label GMOs, the momentum on this issue has shifted to the states. Since 2013, over 25 states have introduced legislation to label GMO foods, and these bills have passed in Connecticut, Maine and Vermont.

Mandatory labeling of GMOs is not a novel idea. Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia and Saudi Arabia are among at least 60 countries that require some labeling on GMO foods. Nor is mandatory labeling an expensive proposition for the United States. A study commissioned by Consumers Union reviewed research on mandatory GMO labeling and estimated that the median cost of labeling per person per year is $2.30, less than a penny a day.

This bill unfairly jeopardizes the existing rights of state and local governments and would undermine the efforts of the thousands of people working to create basic transparency in food labels in their states. We urge you to oppose HR 1599, a bill that would quash the democratic process and keep constituents in the dark about how their food was produced.

If you have any questions or need more information on this issue, please contact Patty Lovera at Food & Water Watch at (202) 683-2465.

Thank you.

Wenonah Hauter

Executive Director