

At the April 4, 2005 shareholder meeting Whole Foods announced a new policy of labeling its private label foods to indicate that they are not sourced from genetically engineered seed.

As a result of this development, there is currently no action directed at Whole Foods.

However, Ecopledge's 'Whole Foods Action Packet' is still available on the Say No To GMOs! site as a resource for others who might want to develop similar actions.



## **2005 Whole Foods Project Packet**

**Working to improve corporate environmental behavior thereby  
preserving a healthy environment for future generations**



### **Background**

Given the unlikeliness of positive environmental change from Washington, Ecopledge believes that creating change directly with corporations is the best course of action at this time.

At Ecopledge, we organize students, investors, the business community, and members of the general public. By using these diverse channels we show people how they can use the power of their

investments, their personal and commercial purchasing power, and employment decisions to influence corporate behavior. This approach allows us to bring the same message to a company from multiple directions and stakeholders.

Students are a primary source of positive social change, and Ecopledge had its beginnings as a student organizing project. Our students organize educational forums, involve and educate community partners and faculty and when applicable sponsor resolutions with student governments. Students also meet directly with corporate executives and have brought their messages to corporate boards at annual shareholder meetings.

### **The Problem with Genetic Engineering of Foods**

When gene technology is used to alter the genetic make up of any food crop or food ingredient, it is considered to be genetically engineered. Genetic engineering (GE) is a technology still in its experimental steps of development. By cutting and splicing DNA, genetic engineers can transfer genes specific to one type of organism into any other organism. By combining the genes of dissimilar and unrelated species, novel organisms are created.

Genetic engineering of food is a recent phenomenon. Field trials of genetically engineered crops began in 1992, and the first commercial planting was in 1995. By 1999, over 98 million acres of genetically engineered crops were planted worldwide, 71% of which were planted in the United States alone. Today over two thirds of all foods in supermarkets contain genetically engineered ingredients!

GE foods are made in the name of convenience by agribusiness, such as Monsanto who sell and profit from the patented GE seeds, as well as the pesticides that these seeds have been engineered to be resistant to.

One of the primary problems with genetically engineered organisms is that we don't know all of the possible dangers of this technology. The techniques used to create GE organisms are imprecise and the results of combining genes from different organisms are unpredictable. The explosion of GE crops on out farms and in our supermarket aisles has happened so quickly that very little research has been done into whether or not this technology is safe. However, studies have shown time and time again that there is significant cause for health and environmental concerns.

Genetically engineered foods are not necessarily safe for human consumption. Different ways of processing proteins -proteins form the structure of all living things- can lead to changes in function or changes in potential for allergy. According to the National Institute of Health, four to eight percent of children and one to two percent of adults exhibit allergies to certain foods and the building blocks of foods mainly proteins. Moreover, proteins that in small quantities were safe may now exceed toxic levels, or new proteins may be produced that we not produced before.

Genetically engineered foods also harm the environment in several ways. Genetically modified organisms can spread their novel gene by bird, insect or wind into wild populations thus contaminating the natural gene pool; unlike other types of contamination, this cannot be reversed.

Pesticide use has been linked to water and soil contamination as well as to cancer, acute illness, learning disabilities and heightened sensitivity to future chemical exposure. Agribusinesses originally claimed that the need for pesticides would decrease with the planting of GE seeds; but time and experience have refuted this claim.

Genetically engineered crops also represent new and potentially invasive forms of life; when genetically engineered genes from crops that are resistant to herbicides spread to weeds "superweeds" are created. "Superweeds" don't respond to herbicides thereby letting loose a veritable weed monster.

There has been a conspiracy of silence amongst the companies profiting from the manufacturing and sales of GE products. This has kept Americans from knowing that they are eating genetically engineered foods. With so many unknown health and environmental considerations surrounding the safety of genetically engineered (GE) foods, something must be done!

### **The Solution**

In order to ensure that human health and the environment are protected from the risks posed by genetic engineering, corporate decision-makers must take a precautionary approach in dealing with genetically engineered plants and foods. Food companies should:

1. Avoid the use of genetically engineered ingredients
2. Use labels to indicate whether their foods products contain genetically engineered ingredients
3. Adopt policies calling on the federal government to tighten regulation of these ingredients, including mandatory safety testing and labeling of GE foods

### **How can Whole Foods be part of the Solution?**

Whole Foods can help break this conspiracy of silence by following the lead of Hain's, Amy's Kitchen, and Nature's Path and list the presence or absence of genetically engineered ingredients on all of its private label products. Although labeling of genetically engineered foods is not required, it is allowed. Labeling foods will protect millions of people who are subject to a myriad of food allergens; while also serving as an educational tool bringing the topic of genetic engineering to the forefront. Above all, it will allow consumers to make informed choices on whether they choose to support GE foods or not.

### **Why Whole Foods?**

Many consumers who have chosen to avoid foods have sought alternative market choices and many have turned to Whole Foods Market. Whole Foods has become a super store for environmentally conscious consumers and is touted as America's first certified organic national grocer. In spite of this, many are questioning whether Whole Foods is telling the Whole Truth to its customers and shareholders concerning the presence of GE ingredients on their shelves and in their products.

Whole Foods sells private label products, both organic and non-organic, that avoid GE ingredients. The Whole Foods web site states, "Consumers can rest assured that the use of genetically modified organisms...are strictly prohibited throughout organic food production," but this information is missing from its organic private product labels and packaging. Whole Foods also claims that its non-organic private label products are GE avoidant (meaning the product was grown with non-GMO seed stock). These products are also not labeled as such.

By failing to provide information on GE ingredients on its labels, Whole Foods is supporting agribusiness in its goal of keeping the genetic manipulation of America's food supply hidden from the American people. Furthermore, Whole Foods refusal to label its products raises the possibility that its products are not GE-free,

### **Strategy**

We are looking to harness the power of students, community members, faculty and consumers to not only increase awareness on the topic of genetic engineering but to also persuade Whole Foods to provide clear labeling on its own Whole Foods private label products thereby increasing the visibility of this information in its stores.

### **On your campus...**

Students will use a variety of strategies to build the campaign on campus and in your community.

1. Grassroots: Sign on letters are a valuable tool to raise the visibility of the campaign and to

demand corporate change. When Whole Foods campaign advocates correspond with executives we will use the sign on letter or postcards as a key leverage tool to demonstrate the widespread and diverse support for labeling.

2. Media: We will use national, regional and local media markets to help educate the public on what Whole Foods is and is not doing. With our help, the media will publicly hold Whole Foods' key decision makers accountable.
3. Visibility: Many students, faculty, community members, consumers and/or Whole Foods' employees have a great deal of concern for the quality and safety of food products but may not be aware of the overwhelming prevalence of the genetically engineered food products on their local supermarket shelves. We will use days of actions and education events to help educate the community at large.
4. Internet: Corporations are not intimidated by a small group of people who show concern. However when they see a national network of bright, sophisticated and strategic stakeholders they will take notice and change.
5. Shareholder Advocacy: Ecopledge's unique partnership with Green Century Capital Management provides us with the opportunity to voice our concerns to institutional investors and the Whole Foods Board of Directors.

## Tactics

1. Grassroots: Every campus will work to get 1000 signatures of people who support our campaign. These will then be delivered to Whole Foods Chairman and CEO John Mackey. Additionally, each campus will outreach to its community and faculty thus creating coalition support letters. These letters will be mailed separately or delivered in person at the shareholder meeting or to local Whole Foods management.
2. Media: Every campus will hold at least one press conference or release. In addition, each campus will work to generate 2 letters to the editor to help show community support for the campaign.
3. Visibility: Each campus will have the chance to hold days of action, meetings with Whole Foods managers at their local Whole Foods market, and education events. The details of these events can be decided on a campus to campus basis.
  - a. Days of action: On campus or at Whole Foods store locations. Distributing stickers, educational pamphlets, gathering signatures and encouraging customers/students to engage with Whole Foods management next time they shop.
  - b. Management Meetings: Schedule a meeting with your local Whole Foods manager. Present the manager with our "demand" and a letter for the Whole Foods manager to sign and send to headquarters, showing that s/he agrees with us.
  - c. Educational Panel: These will be teach-ins or forums for students to learn about the need for labeling and the uncertainty surrounding genetically engineered foods and about the campaign.
4. Internet: If a regional list serve exists, each campus will participate in creating an e-alert and sign on letter.

Shareholder Advocacy: Whole Foods annual shareholder meeting will take place April 4 in NYC. At this meeting we will have the opportunity to bring our concerns to the company directly.

## **Timeline for the Campaign**

### January 2005

- ❖ Mailed initial letter to John Mackey, Chairman and CEO of Whole Foods, introducing our request and campaign
- ❖ Recruitment
- ❖ Distribution of sign on letter - signatures gathered
- ❖ Campaign Kick-offs

### February 2005

- ❖ Outreach to community members and faculty
- ❖ Development of a coalition sign-on letter
- ❖ Meet with Whole Foods managers
  - Present asks and letter to be signed and sent to Whole Foods headquarters
- ❖ Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> Whole Foods Campaign Kick off
  - Press Conference/Release
  - Postcarding

### March 2005

- ❖ Write one month campaign update to executives at Whole Foods
- ❖ Mail in coalition letters
- ❖ Develop a community and/or campus event (tabling, postcarding etc) to get the word out.
- ❖ Phone banking
- ❖ Set date for educational panel

### April 2005

- ❖ Op-ed (media hook annual shareholder meeting)
- ❖ Possibly attend annual meeting
- ❖ Begin planning educational forum, securing speakers
- ❖ Earth Day events
- ❖ Two month anniversary – op-ed (media hook Earth Day)

### May

- ❖ Educational Forum

- Campaign Resources Follow -

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## **Top Ten Reasons Why Whole Foods Should Tell the Whole Truth**

### **1. From the mouth of Whole Foods VP...**

The January 4, 2000 issue of USA Today quoted Margaret Wittenberg, vice president of Whole Foods as saying, "There is an absolute anger among customers that food are being genetically modified and they don't know what ingredients are in their foods."

## **2. Consumers have the right to know**

As of August 1, 2001, Whole Foods Market Inc.'s position statement on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) – The Consumer's Right to Know states: "Consumers simply have the right to choose for themselves between genetically engineered and non-genetically engineered products."

## **3. Consumers want labeling**

Consumers want GE ingredients to be labeled so they can make an informed choice for personal, environmental and ethical reasons. Over a dozen polls in the U.S. have shown that 70-94% of people surveyed want genetically engineered foods to be labeled as such.

## **4. It's a Whole Foods Core Value**

Acknowledging that one of Whole Foods' "Core Values" is to "educate consumers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment" Whole Foods must ensure its products are labeled and that it is providing pamphlets in the stores and materials on its web site outlining the possible health and environmental risks associated with GE foods.

## **5. Labeling will protect people from food allergens**

Genetic engineering may involve the transfer of new and unidentified proteins from one food to another. Often these genes have never been used in the food supply. According to the National Institutes of Health, four to eight percent of children and one to two percent of adults exhibit allergies to certain foods and building blocks of foods, mainly proteins.

## **6. Labeling will foster consumer awareness**

Bioengineering companies have profited under secrecy. Agribusinesses have taken over our food supply without us knowing about it. Labeling can serve as an educational tool allowing customers to publicly debate the benefits and drawbacks of GE foods.

## **7. Monetary contributions are not enough**

Although Whole Foods Market has contributed \$10,000 or more to the Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods, Whole Foods is still denying consumers a choice by not labeling GE ingredients in its own Whole Foods private label products.

## **8. Labeling efforts are already under way**

Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and many other nations are already labeling. The U.S. government already supports labeling of foods for caloric and fat content and the labeling of wines when sulfites are present, so why not identify products that do or do not contain GE ingredients?

## **9. Whole Foods says it can't, but Whole Foods can**

Whole Foods says that it cannot label its products as GE free because of the

unavailability of accurate testing and the economic risk of labeling products prior to an FDA ruling on acceptable language for labels. This has not stopped Hain's, Nature's Best and Amy's Kitchen from labeling their products as such.

#### **10. Labeling will inform consumers - this in turn can have a significant impact on our environment**

Despite early claims that the need for pesticides would decrease with the planting of GE seeds, pesticide use has actually increased. Pesticide use has been linked to soil and water contamination as well as numerous health factors. Genes from GE crops spread by bird, insect and wind, contaminating the natural gene pool. Gene contamination can also lead to the creation of "superweeds" weeds that can no longer be controlled by herbicides, thus further increasing the application of chemicals to our crops, soil and water.

### **Meeting with Whole Foods' Store Manager: Talking Points on Genetic Engineering and the Need for Labeling**

*(Pick and choose your favorite facts to craft your message)*

#### **Whole Foods must adhere to its core values and be an industry leader**

- For a company whose "Core Values" state: "We can generate greater appreciation and loyalty from all of our stakeholders by educating them about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment" little has been done.
- Whole Foods has the opportunity and responsibility to become a leader and advocate for GE labeling by setting a positive example

#### **According to Whole Foods 10-k filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Whole Foods growth is driven by:**

- a. Heightened awareness of the role that foods and nutrition plays in long term health
- b. Increasing consumer concern of the purity and safety of food
- c. Environmental concerns associated with food production
  - Noting that Whole Foods success is based on the above mentioned consumer concerns it is prudent that Whole Foods demonstrate its role and commitment to being the country's natural food industry leader by voluntarily labeling all private products

#### **Waiting for change from the FDA is illogical**

- The same overriding policy structure for genetically engineered crops and foods has been in place since 1986. Change will have to come from the food sector's industry leaders, e.g. Whole Foods.
- Whole Foods says that it cannot label its products as GE free because of the unavailability of accurate testing and the economic risk of labeling products prior to an



FDA ruling on acceptable language for labels. However, Hain's, Nature's Best and Amy's Kitchen have labeled their products as such.

### **GE foods have not been deemed safe by the FDA.**

- Did you know that the FDA relies on the summaries of studies and tests conducted by the company manufacturing the new food to make safety determinations? In sum, the companies profiting from the manufacturing and sales of the GE products determine the safety of GE foods. (

### **GE crops are everywhere**

- Today one quarter of the world's land under cultivation has been planted with genetically engineered crops. In 2003, the United States was the largest producer of GE crops with 105.7 million acres under cultivation.
- Nearly two-thirds of all the food products on the shelves of your local supermarket contain GE ingredients.

### **GE Foods Harm the Environment**

- Early claims that the need for pesticides would decrease with the advent of GE crops have proven to be faulty. Pesticide use has continued to increase as pests develop resistance to the genetically altered crops. Pesticide use has been linked to water and soil contamination.
- Genetically modified organisms spread their novel genes by means of insect, bird or wind thus contaminating the natural gene pool; unlike other types of contamination this cannot be reversed.
- GE plants can unintentionally harm other species. For example, Bt corn, a popular US corn variety genetically engineered to produce its own toxins against a pest known as the European corn borer, doesn't discriminate between "targeted" and "non-targeted" insects – thus the toxic effects can ripple through the entire insect food chain.

### **Whole Foods claims its organic products are GE free and its non-organic products avoid GE but this information is missing!!!**

- Whole Foods web site states, "Consumers can rest assured that the use of genetically modified organisms...are strictly prohibited throughout organic food production." Additionally, Whole Foods claims that its non-organic private label products are GE avoidant or not grown from GE seed stock, but this information is missing on the private labels and packaging.

### **For these reasons and many more we (the students at XXXXX) have joined forces with Ecopledge to ask that Whole Foods:**

- Clearly label its private label products as GE free or verified non-GMO seed stock
- Increase education via in-store pamphlets and online materials on the associated risks of GE foods
- Call on the U.S. government to tighten regulation, including mandatory testing and labeling of GE foods

## **When Approaching Whole Foods' Store Managers Be Sure to Have:**

1. The agenda for the meeting should be carefully planned. The pitch should be clear and concise. The goal of the meeting is to get the Whole Foods manager to sign a letter (attached) that will be sent to the Whole Foods headquarters in Austin, TX. This letter is an opportunity for the manager to use his or her unique influence to participate in the growing movement to avoid the use of genetically engineered ingredients and to use labels to indicate whether food products contain GE ingredients. The demands are simply that Whole Foods clearly label its private label products indicating the presence of absence of GE ingredients. They already have gone to great lengths to ensure that their products are of the finest quality. We are just asking that they inform their consumers of this by labeling.
2. During the course of the meeting, be sure to remain polite. The managers may react emotionally and defensively when approached by community activists. **DON'T FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE.** Instead, try to keep cool and calm. Remember that the managers are not our target, nor are they the key decision makers. You want to be firm in your demands, while always staying friendly in your demeanor. The idea is to be hard on the issues, but soft on people.
3. Give it some time. Leave the manager with any information you think might be helpful for a better understanding of the negative impacts of genetic engineering and the responsibility that Whole Foods has to its customers. Offer the manager some time to make a decision whether to sign the letter. Make clear that you expect a response and that you will be back to learn their decision.
4. If the manager decides to sign the letter and support the demands, you've scored a victory! Make sure to organize a thank you effort to express your appreciation for the manager's assistance. At the same time, make sure that the letter really gets in the mail to Whole Foods. Ask for a duplicate of the signed letter, and then send the duplicate to me at [bwilliamson@ecopledge.com](mailto:bwilliamson@ecopledge.com).

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Media Sound Bites**

**Whole Foods is my favorite store, it does so much more than a conventional supermarket. Why are you protesting Whole Foods?**

- Whole Foods is GREAT. I shop here. But as a consumer I want to know what ingredients are being used in my food.
- Whole Foods claims that its organic products are GE free and its non-organic products

avoid GE but this information is missing from its product labels.

- As an industry leader, Whole Foods has the responsibility to show industry leadership on this important environmental and health issue.
- We believe that the labels' silence on GE ingredients may confuse consumers, and obscures the admirable lengths to which Whole Foods has gone to exclude GE ingredients from all of its private label products, both organic and non-organic.
- Whole Foods Core Values include educating consumers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment. By not labeling Whole Foods is giving in to the biotech and agribusiness agenda of keeping the use of genetic engineering under wraps.

#### **What are you asking Whole Foods to do?**

- Clearly label its private label products as GE free or verified non-GMO seed stock, if indeed they are
- Increase education via in store pamphlets and online materials on the associated risks of GE foods
- Call on the U.S. government to tighten regulation, including mandatory testing and labeling of GE foods

#### **Are your demands fair?**

- Yes. Many manufacturers label their products GE free despite the fact that the FDA has not ruled on acceptable language for labels. These manufacturers include Hain's, Nature's Best and Amy's Kitchen. You can find their products on Whole Foods' shelves.
- By failing to educate consumers on its GE – avoidance policy through labeling and via prominent in-store educational materials, Whole Foods is squandering what should be a natural marketing advantage.

## **Whole Foods Campaign Kick-off Event (Day of Action)**

**On February XX, 2005 students, community members and faculty will engage in Whole Foods Campaign Kick-off designed to send Whole Foods a strong message to label its private label products.**

**The following is a helpful "To Do" list in preparing for your Whole Foods Kick-off event (or any day of action).**

- 1. Schedule a meeting with your local Whole Foods store manager** (before the day of action)
  - Present the Whole Foods store manager with our requests and the letter for the Whole Foods manager to sign and send to Whole Foods headquarters.
  - Engage in a dialogue on the presence and policies of labeling as it pertains to Whole Foods private label products.

- Bring along some products that are labeled GE-free, such as those produced by Hain's, Nature's Best and Amy's Kitchen. Bring a comparable product produced by Whole Foods.
2. **Organize a day of action at your local Whole Foods market.**
    - Recruit students, local campus environmental groups, organic farmers/restaurant owners, health advocates, yoga instructors and campus faculty to convene.
    - Use banners, distribute stickers and educational pamphlets to let Whole Foods' customers know that why food labeling is so important.
    - Create a banner or poster with Whole Foods logo on it and a message about our campaign. Supporters can simply sign the banner/poster with a marker to show their support. This can then be mailed in or delivered at a meeting with Whole Foods executives or at the annual meeting in April.
    - Urge customers to speak to their Whole Foods store manager and pass on the message that Whole Foods' customers want their products labeled.
    - Have postcards or sign-on petitions available-attached.(Make sure to bring enough pens; you'll lose a lot of them over the course of the day).
  3. **Have a back up location**
    - Be aware you may be asked not to postcard on Whole Foods property.
    - Have a high traffic back up location, just in case.
  4. **Organize a press conference at the Whole Foods store location.**
    - Generate coverage of the campaign and your group's activities in the local newspaper.
    - Have appointed speakers ready to speak with journalists.

## **Whole Foods Campaign Kick-off Event Checklist**

**The following is a helpful "To Do" list in the days leading up to the February 26<sup>th</sup> Whole Foods Campaign Kick-off**

### **Recruitment**

\_\_\_ Send out an invitation to all interested parties via email

\_\_\_ Call other environmental, peace, food and/or health associated groups in the area, and invite them to participate.

\_\_\_ The day before the event, call and confirm all the people you know of who said that they would be there.

### **On-Site**

\_\_\_ Have enough postcard / materials

\_\_\_ Make signs or visuals

- \_\_\_ Set a time and specific meeting place for the event
- \_\_\_ Coordinate transportation to and from the event
- \_\_\_ Do a site check!
- \_\_\_ Scout our the area and determine where people should stand, where signs should be held etc.
- \_\_\_ Develop a back up plan
- \_\_\_ After the event write a letter to Whole Foods telling the company about your event, the location and the overall response. **Send a copy to us at Ecopledge!**

## Media

- \_\_\_ Get media outlet list for your area (Call or email Beth at [bwilliamson@ecopledge.com](mailto:bwilliamson@ecopledge.com) or call at 617-426-2506)
- \_\_\_ Prepare media advisory (see sample provided below)
- \_\_\_ Call and fax the media advisory ASAP
- \_\_\_ Tweak the sample press release (see attached)
- \_\_\_ Prepare press packets: include press release and fact sheet.
- \_\_\_ Designate who will be addressing the press



## Sample Media Advisory

**Media Advisory Local Contact:** (insert your name and contact  
February XX, 2005 phone number here)

**National Contact:** Beth Williamson, Ecopledge  
[bwilliamson@ecopledge.com](mailto:bwilliamson@ecopledge.com) – 617-426-2506

## Concerned Citizens Demand Whole Foods Label its Private Label Products

**Your Town** – Supporters from (your campus name) will convene at (local Whole Foods store) to demand Whole Foods adopt a policy to label all genetically engineered (GE) ingredients and non-GE ingredients in products sold under the Whole Foods private labels. Concerned citizens including students and faculty from XXX as well as local community members will send a message to Whole Foods that by not labeling Whole Foods is adhering to the biotech

and agribusiness' agenda to keep the use of genetic engineering under wraps.

**Who:** Students from XXX and other concerned citizens

**What:** Whole Foods Tell the Whole Truth: Day of Action

**When: (approximate time)** Saturday, February 26, 2005

**Where: XXXXX Whole Foods, (Street Address, City)**

**Visuals:** Colorful Banners Reading: **(Determined by Campus)**

Only one-third of Americans are aware that their foods contain genetically engineered ingredients. With so many unknown health and environmental considerations surrounding the safety of GE foods, labeling products that contain or do not contain GE ingredients is only practical. Whole Foods claims that its organic products are GE free and its non-organic products are avoid GE but this information is missing from Whole Foods' labels. As the industry leader in natural and organic foods Whole Foods has the opportunity and responsibility to set a higher industry standard.

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**Sample Press Release**

**For Immediate Release      For More Information:**

February XX, 2005

Your name, Title, (phone number)

Beth Williamson, Ecopledge (617) 426- 2506

## **Consumers Want Genetically Engineered Ingredients Labeled**

**City, State** – Students and other concerned community members gathered at Whole Foods to express their disappointment at Whole Foods' policy of silence on genetically modified foods.

In December 1999, Whole Foods Market Inc., announced a plan to eliminate genetically modified ingredients (GMO) from its private labels, which include Whole Foods, Whole Kids and 365 brands. To date, Whole Foods has not yet followed through on its commitment to give consumers a clear choice of GE free products.

According to Whole Foods web site, consumers can rest assure that the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) is strictly prohibited throughout organic food production and that Whole Foods non-organic private label are GMO avoidant. However, this information is missing from Whole Foods private labels and packaging.

“By not labeling Whole Foods is confusing consumers and is obscuring the admirable lengths in which Whole Foods has gone to exclude genetically engineered ingredients from all of its

private label products, both organic and non-organic,” said XXXX, Title.

Two thirds of all foods in supermarkets contain genetically engineered ingredients; and yet only one-third of Americans are aware of the presence of GE ingredients. Agribusiness, biotech companies and the FDA have conspired to keep Americans from knowing that they are eating genetically engineered foods.

According to Beth Williamson, Ecopledge Environmental Advocate, “Whole Foods can help break this conspiracy of silence by following the lead of Hain’s, Amy’s Kitchen and Nature’s Path and list the presence or absence of GE ingredients.” “Although labeling of genetically engineered foods is not required, it is allowed.”

Whole Foods reasoning behind not labeling its private label products as GE free is due to the unavailability of accurate testing and the economic risk of labeling products prior to an FDA ruling on acceptable language for labels.

“Waiting for change from the FDA is illogical; the same overriding policy structure for genetically engineered crops and foods has been in tact since 1986.” “Change will have to come from the industry sector leader, Whole Foods,” said XXXXX.



### Sample Sign on Letter for Whole Foods management

Date

Mr. John P. Mackey  
Chairman and CEO  
Whole Foods Markets Inc.  
601 North Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78703

Dear Mr. Mackey:

As a Whole Foods manager of the (city, state) store, I am writing to ask that our company take immediate steps to clearly label our private label products as GMO free or as sourced from verified non-GMO seed stock.

With so many unknown health and environmental considerations surrounding the safety of genetically engineered foods, labeling products that do and do not contain GE ingredients seems only practical. Furthermore, by failing to educate customers on Whole Foods’ GE

avoidance policy through labeling and via prominent in-store educational materials, we are missing what should be a natural marketing advantage and instead supporting the conspiracy of silence of the biotech companies and agribusiness.

We are the largest natural and organic supermarkets, and we have said that we will “educate consumers about natural and organic foods, health nutrition and the environment.” This gives us the responsibility to become a leader and advocate for GE labeling.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

**Manager's Name**

**Whole Foods Market**

**Address**

The logo for Ecopledge, featuring the word "ecopledge" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a solid yellow circle.

**Sample Sign on Letter for Whole Foods Campaign Supporters**

Month X, 2005

Mr. John P. Mackey  
Chairman and CEO  
Whole Foods Markets Inc.  
601 North Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78703

Dear Mr. Mackey:

I am writing in support of Ecopledge.com's request that you label all of your food products with regard to their genetically engineered content. I appreciate your efforts in establishing mandatory labeling of foods with GE (genetically engineered) ingredients on a federal level. However, in the absence of action by the FDA, responsible food manufacturers must step forward and take action.

Genetically engineered foods impose health hazards and are a major source of environmental damage and pollution. Noting that Whole Foods' success is based on a myriad of health and environmental concerns, it is prudent that Whole Foods demonstrates its role and commitment to being the country's natural food industry leader by voluntarily labeling its private products.



As previously stated, genetically engineered crops pose serious threats to our food system, environment, and our health. Genetically modified organisms (GMO's) can be spread by bird, insect or winds to non-GE crops and to the wilderness. Once these native species are contaminated, there is no way to contain or clean up this contamination. Last winter, for example, an article in the journal *Nature* showed that genes from genetically altered corn had been discovered in the local varieties of corn grown in a remote Southern Mexican village of Capulalpan.

Despite early claims that the need for pesticides would decrease with the planting of GE seeds, time has proven this claim faulty. Pesticide use has and will continue to increase as pests develop resistance. Moreover, some GE crops, such as soybeans, clearly require more herbicides than conventional crops. Pesticide use has been linked to water and soil contamination and also to cancer, acute illness, learning disabilities and heightened sensitivity to future chemical exposure.

In addition to food supply contamination, genetic engineering also endangers human health and poses several risks to the environment. Genetic engineering may involve the transfer of new and unidentified proteins from one food to another. Often the genes used in genetic engineering have never before been used in the food supply. For these reasons, it is impossible to know whether people may be allergic to the resulting proteins. According to the National Institute of Health, four to eight percent of children and one to two percent of adults exhibit allergies to certain foods and the building blocks of foods, mainly proteins.

The business behind bioengineering is flourishing in secrecy. Today an estimated two-thirds of products on supermarket shelves contain GE ingredients, and only one-third of Americans are aware that their foods contain these ingredients. Labeling will help dispel the secrecy and educate Americans about the fact of GE ingredients are being used.

Your company has stated that its private label products manufactured after October 1, 2001, do not contain GE ingredients. And yet, over three years have passed, and Whole Foods private products continue not to be labeled as such.

As an industry leader in the natural and organic foods market, you have the responsibility to clearly label your products, increase education on the associated risks of GE foods, and continue to call on the U.S. government to tighten regulations, including mandatory testing and labeling of GE foods.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,



Sample Postcard

(Please contact [bwilliamson@ecopledge.com](mailto:bwilliamson@ecopledge.com) for a word version)

Dear CEO Mackey,

I support Ecopledge's request that Whole Foods label their products with regard to their genetically engineered content.

Comments:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_