

## Resolution Regarding Genetically Modified Foods

### THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION,

Recognizing that in 1998 the European Union ruled that food manufacturers must state on a label when genetically modified ingredients have been used; and

Recognizing that genetically modified organism labeling regulations are now (1999-2000) in effect in the European Union<sup>1,2</sup>; and

Recognizing that the British Medical Association has recommended that genetically engineered foods be labeled; and

Recognizing that Australia, New Zealand<sup>3</sup> and Japan have required mandatory labels for genetically engineered foods; and

Recognizing that substantially this same resolution regarding genetically modified organisms recently was adopted by the National Environmental Health Association Council of Delegates; and

Recognizing that the National Environmental Health Association's counterpart in the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health, has adopted a policy position that supports a five-year freeze against genetically modified organisms; and

Recognizing that the Codex, the international food regulatory commission of the World Health Organization/Food and Agriculture Organization, is considering recommendations for the Labeling of Good and Good Ingredients Obtained Through Certain Techniques of Genetic Modifications/Genetic Engineering<sup>4</sup>; and

Further recognizing that data from 2000 show that 54% of soybean and 25% of corn planted in the United States were genetically modified<sup>5</sup>; and

Recognizing that the report of the Scientific Advisory Panel to the US Environmental Protection Agency on genetically engineered crops expressed concerns related to human exposure to and consumption of the plant proteins<sup>6</sup>; and

Recognizing that legislation has now been introduced into the United States Congress that calls for the labeling of products that contain genetically engineered crops<sup>7</sup>; and

Recognizing that food labeling both upholds and is consistent with the environment "right to know" value that is core to environmental programs in the country; and

Recognizing that any opposition to labeling based on finding that genetically modified food products are safe discounts issues of consumer sovereignty and bioethical concerns; and

Recognizing that food labeling makes possible a range of legitimate consumer interests ranging from a desire to avoid allergic reactions to the opportunity to exercise informed buying decisions; and

Recognizing the 1992 interim report on a survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Extension Service revealing that 85% of the American public that was surveyed felt it important to label foods if biotechnology is used; and

Recognizing a 1999 Time magazine poll finding 81% of respondents wanted genetically engineered food labeled, Therefore,

1. Resolves that APHA declare its support for the "understandable" labeling of any food product that contains genetically modified organisms; and
2. Further resolves that APHA lend its support to the passage of H.R. 3883, the Genetically Engineered Food Safety Act, which calls for the labeling of food products that include genetically modified organisms.

### References

1. European Commission. Regulation (EC) No. 1139/98. 1998
2. European Commission. Regulation (EC) No. 2000/49. 2000
3. CX/FL 01/7 Proposed draft recommendations for the Labeling of Food and Food Ingredients Obtained Through Certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering (originated from Alinorm 99/22, Appendix VIII)
4. ANZFA (Australia New Zealand Food Authority). Standard A18 – Food produced using Gene Technology. 1999
5. USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Crop Production – Acreage supplement (PCP-BB), 2000 Cr Pr 2-5 (6-00)a (available at <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nasst/field/pcp-bba/acrg0600.txt>).
6. SAP Report No. 2000-7c, March 12, 2001 *Set of Scientific Issues Being Considered by the Environmental Protection Agency Regarding: Bt Plant Pesticides Risk and Benefit Assessment*, "The consensus of the Panel was that there were two concerns related to exposure/consumption of proteins – acute toxicity and allergenicity. The Panel believed that it is not possible to establish an exposure threshold for all proteins, but that well established protocols exist for testing individual proteins for acute toxicity. The Panel consensus was that it is not currently possible to identify conservative threshold levels for allergenicity." P.71
7. H.R. 3883, The Genetically Engineered Food Safety Act, which calls for the labeling of food products that include genetically modified organisms.

### **Submitted by**

Paul Locke, MPH, DrPH

for consideration at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association meeting in Atlanta, GA