



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01200**

BY: **MR. STEWART (BURNABY SOUTH)**

DATE: **MARCH 9, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE LAWRENCE MACAULAY, PC, MP**

Response by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

SIGNATURE
Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT
Genetic engineering

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Canada's regulatory system for agricultural products of biotechnology employs a rigorous, science-based assessment process to protect human and animal health and the environment. As a result, all novel products must undergo comprehensive science-based safety assessments before they can be cultivated by a grower, used in livestock feed or made available to the consumer. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) assesses the safety of the end product for release into the environment and for use as a livestock feed, while Health Canada assesses the safety for use as food and its effect on human health.

Under the Food and Drug Act and Regulations, it is not mandatory to identify the method of production when genetic modification is used to develop a food. Health Canada only requires mandatory labelling for food products, including genetically modified (GM) foods, where clear, scientifically established health risks or significant nutritional changes have been identified that can be mitigated through labelling. For example, the presence of a priority allergen in a food must be declared to alert consumers. Method of production labelling is allowed as long as it is truthful and not misleading.

The National Standard of Canada Voluntary Labelling and Advertising of Foods That Are and Are Not Products of Genetic Engineering (the National Standard) provides guidance on method of production labelling for GM foods. The National Standard defines terms and sets out various criteria for making claims about whether or not a food contains ingredients that are products of genetic engineering. All labelling claims must be understandable, informative, not false or misleading, verifiable and compliant with all Canadian regulations. The technical content of the National Standard was reaffirmed by the Canadian General Standards Board Committee on Voluntary Labelling of Foods Obtained or not Obtained through Genetic Modification in May 2016. The National Standard can be viewed at www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/ongc-cgsb/programme-program/normes-standards/internet/032-0315/index-eng.html.

Several organizations participated in developing the Standard, including consumer groups, food manufacturers, grocery distributors, provincial representatives and farm organizations, as well as federal government departments and agencies.

Voluntary labelling is the primary means of communication between industry and consumers for non-health and safety related information. Companies can label GM foods using the National Standard designed to ensure label information is clear and not misleading.

The Government of Canada's approach to the labelling of GM food is supported by positions expressed previously by the Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology; the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee; the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food; and the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the international food standards body within the United Nations system where this issue has received significant consideration over the past number of years. In 2011, the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted a compilation of existing Codex texts that provide guidance for the labelling of foods, including those derived from modern biotechnology. Canada's approach is consistent with this guidance.