



GM in your shopping basket?

Referenced version of printed leaflet

September 2015

Genetically modified (GM) food is one of the top three food safety worries in the UK.¹ Food Standards Agency surveys show concern about GM at an all-time high² but GM foods are creeping into the shops unnoticed. It's mostly cooking oil and American sweet treats at the moment³ but if we don't object now, more will follow.

Why does it matter?

The GM ingredients on sale in our shops are grown in ways that harm people, animals and the environment.

Most GM soya is designed to survive being sprayed with large doses of specific weed killers, mostly glyphosate which, according to the World Health Organisation, probably causes cancer.⁴ It has been sprayed so extensively that glyphosate-resistant weeds are now commonplace^{5 6} and GM companies are creating new GM crops that can be sprayed with even more powerful herbicides.⁷

GM Bt maize produces a substance that kills insect pests, but in time they develop resistance.⁸ Meanwhile beneficial insects like lacewings and ladybirds are also harmed.⁹

GM patents shift control from farmers to big business.

GM supports an industrial approach to agriculture that is about profits for the few, not good food for the rest of us.

GM farming has caused a 90% decline in monarch butterflies.^{10 11}

How can I spot it?

In the UK, foods made with GM ingredients are legally required to say **genetically modified** on the label.¹² This may appear beside the relevant ingredients or elsewhere on the label. Either way it is likely to be in very small print. GM products are often imported to the UK so have a printed sticky label placed over the original packaging to "translate" the ingredients into a form that meets our regulations. 'Modified' (as in modified maize starch) does not mean GM.

Be careful about information you see online because many websites focus on America where GM ingredients are very widely used and do not have to appear on the label.

What should I look out for?

The main culprits are cooking oil and highly processed American sweet treats. Big brands like KTC, Reese's, Hershey and Oreo have some products that are GM and some that aren't.

GM foods have been spotted in Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrison's, the Co-op, Marks & Spencer and Waitrose. They appear in cut price retailers, expensive food halls and sweet shops and are sold online by Amazon and others.¹³

Eating out

GM cooking oil (which is widely used in restaurants and takeaways) and ingredients should be clearly labelled on the menu but often are not.¹⁴ In 2015 Domino's started selling GM pizza bases but took several months to update their website and printed menus to make that clear.¹⁵ To be sure you are not eating GM when you eat out, you need to ask the staff to check the small print on their supplies. See www.gmfreeze.org/cookingoil to find out more.

Animal feed

Most meat, eggs and dairy products on sale in the UK come from animals that have eaten GM feed.^{16 17 18 19} This does not have to be listed on the label so unless it's organic (where GM is not allowed), it is very difficult to know what you are eating. See www.gmfreeze.org/gmfed to find out more.

What can I do?

All the big supermarkets like to shout about their ethics and none of them allow GM ingredients in their own products but we must let them know that we don't want GM on the shelves, whatever the brand.

Read the labels carefully and **if you find GM for sale let retailers know that you aren't happy:**

- Complain in store, write to your favourite brands and contact the supermarkets. See www.gmfreeze.org/shopping for tips and contact details.
- 'Name and shame' on social media, remembering to tag the brands and supermarkets to make sure they notice your comments.
- Sign up to GM Freeze to join a growing movement of people saying **NO to GM**.

Visit www.gmfreeze.org/shopping for up to date information and to get involved.

If you would like to see exactly where we get our information, visit www.gmfreeze.org/shopping or call us for a fully referenced version of this leaflet.

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GM Freeze is the national umbrella campaign for a moratorium on GM food and farming in the UK. We believe that our food should be produced responsibly, fairly and sustainably. Our members include national charities like Friends of the Earth and the Soil Association, specialist and grassroots campaign groups, scientists, farmers, food producers, retailers and concerned individuals.

GM Freeze is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales, United Kingdom. Company No: 05525160

Phone calls cost 3p per minute plus your telephone company's access charge.

References

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³ GM Freeze log of GM products spotted in the UK: <http://www.gmfreeze.org/actions/5/>

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- ¹¹ Center for Food Safety, February 2015 *Monarchs in Peril; Herbicide-Resistant Crops and the Decline of Monarch Butterflies in North America* <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/reports/3708/monarchs-in-peril-herbicide-resistant-crops-and-the-decline-of-monarch-butterflies-in-north-america#>
- ¹² Food Standards Agency webpage, updated January 2013 *GM labelling* <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/novel/qm/qm-labelling>
- ¹³ GM Freeze log of GM products spotted in the UK: <http://www.gmfreeze.org/actions/5/>
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¹⁹ GM Freeze briefing, April 2013 *The Co-op, GM Soya Animal Feed and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy* <http://www.gmfreeze.org/publications/briefings/152/>

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