

Opinion: People have a right to know what they are eating

By Gary Hirshberg and Eric Schlosser

An unprecedented agricultural experiment is being conducted at America's dinner tables. While none of the processed food we ate 20 years ago contained genetically engineered ingredients, now 75 percent of it does – even though the long-term human health and environmental impacts are unknown. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't require labeling of genetically engineered foods. But as the current drive to get labeling on the ballot in California confirms, consumers want to know whether our food contains these revolutionary new things.

In 1992, the FDA ruled that genetically engineered foods didn't need independent safety tests or labeling requirements before being introduced. But one of its own scientists disagreed, warning there were “profound differences” with genetically engineered foods. Genetically engineered seed manufacturers were allowed to sell their products without telling consumers. A 2006 survey found that 74 percent of Americans had no idea that genetically engineered foods were already being sold.

Biotech companies have fought labeling, claiming genetically engineered crops are “substantially the same” and produce larger yields – both unproven claims. But genetically engineered crops have led to the increased use of pesticides, often sold by the same companies that make genetically engineered seeds.

About 94 percent of U.S. grown soybeans are genetically engineered and contain a gene that protects them against glyphosate, now the nation's most widely used pesticide. But glyphosate is becoming ineffective as “superweeds” become

resistant to it, forcing farmers to use even stronger herbicides. Widespread adoption of genetically engineered corn has also led to pesticide resistance.

Gary Hirshberg is the president and CE-Yo of Stonyfield Yogurt. Eric Schlosser is the author of "Fast Food Nation" and co-producer of the documentary "Food, Inc."

Read the whole story