

Welcome to TimesPeople  
Get Started

TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com

8:23 PM

Recommend

HOME PAGE | TODAY'S PAPER | VIDEO | MOST POPULAR | TIMES TOPICS

Get Home Delivery | Log In | Register Now

The New York Times

# Business

Search All NYTimes.com

Go



WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OPINION | ARTS | STYLE | TRAVEL | JOBS | REAL ESTATE | AUTOS

### Search Business

News, Stocks, Funds, Companies

Go

### Financial Tools

Select a Financial Tool

### More in Business »

Global Business

Markets

Economy

DealBook

Media & Advertising

Small Business

Your Money

Energy & Environment



**1 in 4 Nevadans** owe more than their home is worth.  
- Review Journal

Paid for by Nevada Fair Housing Board

Advertise on NYTimes.com

## 'Non-GMO' Seal Identifies Foods Mostly Biotech-Free

More Articles in Business »



Genetic ID

A technician processing DNA for a test of biotech crops in Fairfield, Iowa.

By WILLIAM NEUMAN  
Published: August 28, 2009

Alarmed that genetically engineered crops may be finding their way into organic and natural foods, an industry group has begun a campaign to test products and label those that are largely free of biotech ingredients.



Top, Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times; Above, Genetic ID

A campaign hopes to back up claims some food makers are already making.

With farmers using gene-altered seeds to grow much of North America's corn, soybeans, canola and sugar, ingredients derived from biotech crops have become hard for food companies to avoid. But many makers of organic and natural foods are convinced that their credibility in the marketplace requires them to do so.

The industry group, the Non-GMO Project, says its new label is aimed at reassuring consumers and will be backed by rigorous testing.

"There's a vulnerability here that the industry is addressing," said Michael J. Potter, the founder and president of Eden Foods and a board member of the Non-GMO Project, the organization responsible for the testing and labeling campaign.

SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS

SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY



Have you joined? It's free.

The New York Times  
**nytimes.com** | **LinkedIn**

The New York Times and LinkedIn have teamed up to give you customized industry news. Automatically.

[Click here to activate](#)



Now covering Las Vegas.  
Go to [clear.com/lasvegas](http://clear.com/lasvegas)



Advertise on NYTimes.com

### Politics E-Mail



Keep up with the latest news from Washington with the daily Politics e-mail newsletter.

[Sign Up](#)

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

### MOST POPULAR - BUSINESS

E-MAILED | BLOGGED

1. Reluctance to Spend May Be Legacy of Recession
2. Your Money: How Retirees Can Spend Enough, but Not Too Much
3. 'Non-GMO' Seal Identifies Foods Mostly Biotech-Free
4. Downturn Dims Prospects Even at Top Law Schools
5. Shortcuts: For Best Results, Take the Sting Out of Criticism
6. Investors in Cerberus Seek to Pull \$5.5 Billion
7. More Sun for Less: Solar Panels Drop in Price
8. Talking Business: It's Time to Admit That Money Funds Involve Risk
9. Off the Charts: After a Bumpy Ride, Back at Square One
10. Your Money: Maybe It's Time to Change Credit Cards

As plantings of conventional crops with genetic modifications soared in recent years, Mr. Potter put in place stringent safeguards to ensure that the organic soybeans he bought for [tofu](#), soy milk and other products did not come from genetically engineered plants. He even supplies the seed that farmers use to grow his soybeans.

But many other companies have not been so careful, and as a result, Mr. Potter said, the organic and natural foods industry is like "a dirty room" in need of cleaning.

"What I've heard, what I know, what I've seen, what's been tested and the test results that have been shared with me, clearly indicate that the room is very dirty," Mr. Potter said.

Hundreds of products already claim on their packaging that they do not contain genetically modified ingredients, but with little consistency in the labeling and little assurance that the products have actually been tested. The new labeling campaign hopes to clear up such confusion.

The initials GMO stand for genetically modified organism. Participants in the Non-GMO Project include major players in the organic and natural foods business, like [Whole Foods Market](#).

Whole Foods plans to place the project's seal on hundreds of products it markets under its "365" store brand. Nature's Path, a leading manufacturer of organic packaged foods like cereals, frozen waffles and granola bars, has also embraced the initiative.

The project's seal, a butterfly perched on two blades of grass in the form of a check mark, will begin appearing on packaged foods this fall. The project will not try to guarantee that foods are entirely free of genetically modified ingredients, but that manufacturers have followed procedures, including testing, to ensure that crucial ingredients contain no more than 0.9 percent of biotech material. That is the same threshold used in Europe, where labeling is required if products contain higher levels.

Dag Falck, a project board member who is the organic program manager of Nature's Path, said testing and labeling were needed to protect the industry from the steady spread of biotech ingredients. His company has been testing for such ingredients for several years and is strengthening those measures.

"The thing is, if we have a contamination problem that's growing in organics, what will happen one day when someone tests something and finds out that organics is contaminated beyond a reasonable amount, say 5 or 10 percent?" he said. "Consumers would lose all faith in organics."

While a consensus has developed among scientists that the genetically modified crops now in cultivation are safe, many biotech opponents say that questions remain over whether such foods pose health risks and whether the crops, and agricultural practices associated with them, could damage the environment.

The genetic modifications used in major crops in the United States largely involve traits beneficial to farmers. Some make the plants resistant to insects while others allow them to tolerate sprays of a common herbicide used to combat weeds.

Plantings of crops with genetic modifications have risen sharply over the last decade, to the point that about 85 percent of corn and canola and 91 percent of soybean acreage this year was sown with biotech seed. Few food products in the supermarket lack at least some element derived from these crops, including oils, corn syrup, corn starch and soy lecithin.



[Go to Complete List »](#)



### Health tips for frugal travelers

ALSO IN TRAVEL »

Last-minute Labor Day getaways  
36 hours in Oslo, Norway

**nytimes.com**

TRAVEL

ADVERTISEMENTS



[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

Ads by Google what's this?

**Wings of Nature TM**  
Best organic health bar, gluten free, no refined sugar, tastes great  
[www.freshharvestproducts.com](http://www.freshharvestproducts.com)

**Organic Food- SunOrganic**  
Wholesome certified organic food to eat with confidence. Fast delivery.  
[www.sunorganic.com](http://www.sunorganic.com)

**100% Pure Agave Nectar**  
Amazing Taste and Great Prices Too Low Glycemic Natural Sweetener  
[www.wildorganics.net](http://www.wildorganics.net)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

The most recent agricultural sector to convert is sugar beets. Once this year's crop is

processed, close to half of the nation's sugar will come from gene-engineered plants. [Monsanto](#), a major developer of such seeds, has said it plans to develop biotech wheat, and scientists are moving forward on other crops.

1 | 2 [NEXT PAGE »](#)

[Sign in to Recommend](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on August 29, 2009, on page B1 of the New York edition.

[More Articles in Business »](#)

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS



**Follow the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Business People:**  
Get home delivery of *The Times* every day.

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

**Organic Baby Formula**

Buy Vermont Organics for your baby, it's not a toddler formula!  
[www.pbmstore.com](http://www.pbmstore.com)

**Organic Hotel Germany**

Kenners LandLust - simply different Stay with us and feel at home.  
[www.kenners-landlust.de](http://www.kenners-landlust.de)

**Wings of Nature TM**

Best organic health bar, gluten free, no refined sugar,tastes great  
[www.freshharvestproducts.com](http://www.freshharvestproducts.com)

**Related Searches**

- [Organic Food](#)
- [Labeling and Labels](#)
- [Biotechnology](#)

- [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

**REAL ESTATE »**



**Furnished Rentals Are on the Rise**

**OPINION »**

**Weekend Opinionator: Kennedy and Bork**

Can today's political acrimony be traced back to a 1987 speech?

**TRAVEL »**



**Backpacking Made Easy, With 4-Footed Friends**

**OPINION »**



**Letters: Helping Patients Cope With Death**

**THEATER »**



**Love in All Its Feverish, Irrational Glory**

**FASHION & STYLE »**



**For Him, the Web Was No Safety Net**