

# **National Aquaculture Association Policy on Genetically Modified Organisms**

## Background

Genetically modified organisms (GMO's) are defined as organisms (i.e. plants, animals or microorganisms) in which the genetic material (DNA) has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination. There are at least 19 species of GMO plants (alfalfa, apple, canola, chicory, corn, cotton, creeping bentgrass, flax, melon, papaya, plum, potato, rice, rose, soybean, squash, sugar beet, tobacco, and tomato) that have been federally approved for use in the United States. There is one GMO food animal, a salmon, and several GMO ornamental fish (zebra danio, long fin tetra, tiger barb, silver shark) which have been federally approved for use in the United States. These GMO plants and animals have received rigorous scientific federal scrutiny to ensure they will not adversely impact public health or the environment. GMO microorganisms produce a myriad of products currently used in the pharmaceutical (e.g. human insulin), chemical, and food (renin to produce cheese) industries. GMO plants are often used as feedstuffs in domestic and international livestock populations. No scientific studies have revealed any adverse impacts of feeding GMO plants to livestock health, productivity, nutrition profile or allergenic potential. Because DNA and protein are normal components of the diet and are digested, there are no detectable or reliably quantifiable traces of GMO components in animal milk, flesh, and eggs following consumption of GMO feed.

State required specific labeling of GMO products and even the labeling of animals that have consumed GMO feed ingredients is highly controversial. Argument is made that the public has a right-to-know if the product is a GMO or was fed GMO ingredients. Argument is made that, consistent with the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, if the GMO product is equivalent to a non-GMO product, there are no food safety or public health concerns and hence, no need to specifically label these products. State specific labeling requirements would create a hodgepodge of labeling standards that would in practice be difficult and cumbersome to comply with. Congress is currently considering establishing a broadly applied national statute dealing with this issue.

(cont.)

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Policy

NAA:

1. Encourages a thorough scientifically based investigation into human food safety of genetically modified aquatic organisms.
2. Encourages a thorough scientifically based investigation into the environmental safety of genetically modified aquatic organisms.
3. Encourages sound, scientifically based risk analysis by the federal regulatory agencies.
4. Encourages various continued and vigorous scientific investigations into ways to improve aquatic organism production efficiencies and product quality for consumer's benefit including the use of genetically modified aquatic organisms.
5. Discourages policies, decisions, and regulations of genetically modified organisms that are not supported by scientifically based investigation.
6. Supports federal legislation that would create a uniform labeling program.