

Shareholders Again Ask Abbott Labs to Label GM Ingredients in Baby Formula

Jennifer Elks | May 6, 2014

Shareholders at Abbott Laboratories' annual meeting last week sent a message to management and the Board of Directors — for the second year in a row — that they are concerned about the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the company's Similac infant formula. The shareholder resolution, filed by environmental health advocacy organization **As You Sow**, was supported by 6.7 percent of shareholders, representing over \$2.2 billion in shares.



The resolution was filed by **As You Sow** after Abbott remained unwilling to address concerns about GMOs in its Similac infant formula and other products. Peer-reviewed scientific research has demonstrated that genetically modified crops can lead to increased pesticide use, pesticide-resistant weeds and insects, crop blights, and risks to public health.

"Shareholders are increasingly concerned about GMOs in Similac infant formula," said Andrew Behar, CEO of **As You Sow**. "They know that genetically modified crops are threatening America's health and its food security. Abbott has yet to address this concern in any meaningful way."

While GMOs are labeled or banned in 64 countries — including the European Union, India, Russia, China, and Japan — the US has no such regulations, and does not conduct or require long-term safety studies on environmental or health impacts. According to a 2013 New York Times poll, 93 percent of Americans support GMO labeling. The Vermont legislature passed a GMO labeling law late last month, and similar labeling laws have already been passed in Maine, Connecticut, and Alaska.

"GMO labeling in the US has begun, and its continuation is inevitable," said Austin Wilson, **As You Sow's** Environmental Health Program Manager. "By labeling its products now, Abbott will demonstrate its leadership and commitment to transparency, and increase shareholder value. With more disclosure, consumers will be able to make more informed decisions that help protect their family's health."

The shareholder resolution at Abbott called on the company to identify and label all food products manufactured or sold under its brand names or private labels that may contain genetically engineered ingredients, unless long-term safety testing demonstrates that genetically engineered crops, organisms, or products thereof are not harmful to humans, animals, and the environment.

In January, **As You Sow** celebrated victory when food giant General Mills announced that it had removed GMOs from Original Cheerios. Shortly thereafter, GMO Inside celebrated a similar commitment from Post to have Grape Nuts cereal verified by the Non-GMO Project on store shelves later that month.