

Abbott Labs, DuPont Reject Investor Proposals To Eliminate GMOs

Mike Hower | May 1, 2013



Abbott Laboratories last week rejected a proposal from shareholders to remove genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from its natural products, which includes its Similac baby formula. Biotech firm DuPont also defeated a resolution to disclose genetically engineered seeds.

The resolutions were filed by **As You Sow**, a nonprofit organization that promotes corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy.

As You Sow claims proponents of GMOs frequently cite inconclusive and short-term scientific studies, but researchers have only recently begun looking at the impact of GMOs over an entire lifespan.

A 2012 peer-reviewed study in Food and Chemical Toxicology found that 70 percent of lab rats fed GMO corn over their entire lives died prematurely from organ failure and tumors, compared to a control group eating non-GMO corn.

“Removing GMOs from nutritional products like infant formula can only benefit Abbott,” says Andrew Behar, CEO of **As You Sow**. “As new and credible scientific concerns are raised, consumers are demanding to be given a choice in what foods they eat and feed their families. Abbott has an opportunity to lead the industry in being proactive on this important issue.”

Consumer preference is also changing, **As You Sow** says. A recent poll found that 91 percent of citizens want GMOs to be labeled, and more than 75,000 people signed a petition asking Abbott to remove GMOs from their infant formula. Whole Foods announced in March that it will begin requiring GMO labeling on all food sold in its stores in the next five years and will not sell genetically engineered seafood if it is allowed onto the market.

Over 60 countries, including the entire European Union, Australia, China, Japan, India and even Russia now require GMO labeling. In the U.S., Vermont is poised to be the first state to mandate GMO labeling after the passage of a labeling bill, and Connecticut is following close behind.

Major food companies including Walmart also are discussing lobbying for a national labeling program to avoid inconsistent labeling requirements in each state. Late last week, Senator Barbara Boxer and Congressman Peter DeFazio introduced a bill requiring the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to clearly label genetically engineered food.