

ENSA position paper on GMO and GMO-free labelling – February 2013 –

Key Messages

- ENSA and its members are against the use of GMOs in soy food;
- For years, the members of ENSA have had a strong commitment not to use GMOs in their natural soy food;
- ENSA calls for harmonised rules on the use of GMO-free labels on foodstuffs at EU level.

➤ ENSA's position on the use of GMOs in soy food

European consumers have shown and still show a clear preference for non-GMO products. In addition to the concerns about the consequences of GMOs on human health, the impact of GMOs on the environment is a concern, in particular their effect on biodiversity and existing species.

ENSA members have made a clear choice to use non-genetically modified crops of soy beans and are committed to providing healthy soy food made from GMO-free soy beans. It is therefore essential that consumers are accurately informed about the products they purchase and have the right to know whether a product they consume contains GMOs (even below 0.9%) or if it is GMO-free.

➤ ENSA's commitment to non-GMO products

The members of ENSA do not use any GMOs during the production of their soy products and have signed a Charter by which they commit themselves to produce only non-GMO soy food.

To ensure this commitment is maintained, ENSA members have put in place traceability systems for the sourcing of their soybeans to avoid any contamination of their products with GMOs from cultivation, during transport, storage or processing. The whole supply chain is tailored to certify that the soy beans and soy products are not exposed to GMOs at any stage of the chain. This ensures compliance with the ENSA Charter.

The efficacy of these traceability systems has been confirmed by certification of third party experts also including consumer associations which have found no presence of GMOs in the soy products of ENSA members.

➤ ENSA's call for harmonised rules on GMO-free labels

Currently, harmonised labeling rules exist at EU level for products *containing* GMOs. According to the legislation, any product or ingredient containing more than 0.9% GMOs must be labelled as such.

By contrast, there are no harmonised rules for the labelling of 'GMO-free' products, with the following consequences:

- Member States have different definitions of what constitutes a 'GMO-free' product. Some consider that any product not falling under the scope of GMO-labelling (i.e. below 0.9%) is GMO-free whereas others consider that a '0' tolerance approach (i.e. below the detection limit) should apply to GMO-free products.

- As Member States are free to introduce national rules for the labelling of GMO-free foodstuffs, some countries like Germany, Finland and France have labelling regimes, however, such national legislation for GMO-free labeling differs across the EU. For instance, Finland has legislation but requires a zero tolerance for GMO-free. In Germany, the national GMO-free logo, 'Ohne Gentechnik' can be used for foodstuff below 0.1% GMO. In France, products of vegetal origin containing less than 0.1% GMO can be labeled as 'GMO free'. This statement can appear front-of-pack based on additional requirements on the quantity of GM-free ingredient. Although it does not have any specific GMO-free legislation, Austria applies a threshold of 0.1% for GMO-free claims for plant-based foods.

- Other Member States that have not adopted specific rules for the labeling of GMO-free products are able to interpret the EU Regulation on genetically modified food and feed¹ in different ways e.g. by requesting zero tolerance for GMO-free labeling, by not allowing 'free-from' claims at all because all foodstuffs have the same characteristics or by permitting a higher threshold. This leads to confusion for consumers and distortion in the EU market.

- Although all products of ENSA members are GMO-free, not all products currently bear a 'GMO-free' label, as applying such a label in countries where no specific national legislation for the 'GMO-free' labeling of products exists remains a challenge.

- ENSA believes that the EU should adopt harmonised rules for GMO-free labelling to ensure consistency in the EU market and that the threshold for GMO-free labelling should be harmonised at EU level at 0.1%. This percentage is a reasonable detection limit, significantly better than the threshold of 0.9% for GMO labeling, and representative of GMO-free soy beans available on the world market. This will ensure that soyfood producers who invest in traceability and certification of GMO-free soy beans and even pay an extra premium to their suppliers, are able to label their products as GMO-free which is also relevant information for the consumer.

The co-existence of different approaches for the labelling of GMO-free products can lead to confusion for EU consumers, which expect the GMO-free label and/or absence of such GMO-free label to have the same meaning and the same conditions of use in all the Member States of the EU. It also hinders the internal market and the free movement of goods, as food manufacturers that want to label their products as GMO-free are not subject to the same requirements on all markets.

→ **The members of ENSA are committed to providing non-GMO soy food and believe that consumers have the right to know which products are GMO-free. It is essential that rules for the labeling of GMO-free foodstuffs are harmonised at a European level so that consumers are informed about the composition of the products they purchase and consume, and food manufacturers are able to fully benefit from the EU single market.**

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of 22 September 2003 on genetically modified food and feed



About ENSA

Established in January 2003, the ENSA represents the interests of Natural Soyfoods Manufacturers in Europe. The term “natural” refers to the production process used by ENSA members to produce food using whole soybeans. Soy food products from ENSA members are produced without any use of GM (genetically modified) material or GM beans. The ENSA is an association of internationally operating companies, ranging from large corporations to small, family-owned businesses. ENSA gathers 11 members, which employ some 1500 employees and realize a combined turnover of close to 500 Mio €.

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