

September 2013



Good Food, Good Life

Nestlé framework on food, biotechnology and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

1. Our responsibility

The Food Industry

The global food industry plays an important role in modern society, connecting rural areas with cities, and permitting the evolution of lifestyles and societies.

As the increasing affluence of world population leads to changing lifestyles and food consumption, it is our responsibility to participate in the continued evolution of food systems linked to increased urbanization, to help address the challenges of sustainable food production and availability.

In addition, our aspiration to be the leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness places us in a unique position to help address health concerns related to adequate and appropriate nutrition, including the 'double burden' of malnutrition.

Challenges around Resources & Nutrition

Planetary boundaries, resource scarcity (water, land) and degradation of resources (soil, water, forests, fish stocks), create challenges in terms of optimal use of land resources for food production.

These challenges require solutions and Nestlé has a role to play in helping address them, including through reducing food losses, increasing productivity and ensuring the availability of safe food.

Biotechnology

Biotechnology is defined by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity as "any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use." For thousands of years, humankind has used biotechnology in agriculture, food production and medicine. Biotechnology covers a multitude of techniques, of which genetic modification is only one aspect.

Nestlé's approach is to support those technologies which have been proven to be safe to human and animal health; and which contribute to improving the nutritional value of food, sustainable crop production, the livelihoods of farmers, or identifying the pre-disposition to disease.

We use several biotechnology methods which do not involve genetic modification practices, such as fermentation (e.g. yogurt), marker assisted selection and somatic embryogenesis. For example, as part of our efforts to address micronutrient deficiencies, we promote the development and dissemination of bio-fortified crops like cassava and millet which are selected using marker assisted selection, for their natural higher content of vitamins or minerals.

Marker assisted selection" and somatic embryogenesis are used in our operations to breed trees that naturally produce higher quality coffee and cocoa and to accelerate the propagation of selected coffee and cocoa plantlets respectively. Finally, breakthroughs in genetics have made possible nutritional solutions spanning disease risk reduction and management, and solutions tailored to genetic make-up.

Food Safety and Compliance

Safety is our top priority and only ingredients which are permitted by the regulatory authorities and which comply with strict safety standards are used in our diverse offerings to consumers.

Consumers' Right to Know

We support consumers' right to know what is in their food and are committed to developing and providing information that encourages and empowers people to make informed choices. We want to give full transparency to our consumers and we are committed to providing information about the use of ingredients which are derived from GMOs.

2. Our position on genetic modification and consumers' right to know within the context of defined regulatory frameworks

Genetic modification (GM) is one aspect of biotechnology and has a role to play in sustainable food production. The most common examples of GM are the transfer of genes from bacterial origin to plants like soy bean, cotton or corn in order to make them pest-resistant or herbicide-tolerant.

GMOs go through a regulatory approval process to ensure their safety prior to their authorisation for use in food products. Only ingredients authorised by local regulatory authorities and which comply with strict regulatory and safety evaluations are used in our products.

As a global food manufacturer, we take into consideration local needs, cultural differences and consumer preferences as well as attitudes concerning the use of ingredients derived from GMOs. The decision to use, or not to use such ingredients is made at the local level taking into account the above considerations, as well as national legislation.

Nestlé supports consumers' right to know what is in their food and we are committed to providing information about the use of ingredients derived from GMOs in Nestlé products worldwide. We support the disclosure of the presence of GMOs or GMO-derived ingredients not only in packaged foods, but also in non-packaged and restaurant foods. To this end, when regulations related to disclosure of GMOs are to be applied, we favour clear thresholds that are science-based, practical, and verifiable and serve the interests of consumers.

3. Guiding Principles for Regulatory Framework for Disclosure

Concerning governments' implementation of genetically modified organism (GMO) disclosure regulations, including labelling, we favour systems that are science-based and serve the interests of consumers. We support regulations which perform a thorough pre-market safety assessment and timely authorisation of GMOs used in food for human consumption and animal feed, and which are based on the GM content in the food ingredient as this can be verified by analysis.

Traces of GMOs can often be detected in non-GM materials. This is because during the production, transportation, and processing of agricultural products, unintended mixing of small quantities of GM material can occur. We therefore support regulations related to disclosure which have precise and practical thresholds that are science-based and verifiable.