

RESOLUTION # 3

LABELING OF FOODS WITH BIO-ENGINEERED INGREDIENTS

1 **WHEREAS**, some consumers have expressed a desire to be informed on
2 package labels whether a raw or processed food product they are buying contains
3 ingredients produced using biotechnology or genetic modification; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's stated policy on "Foods
5 Derived from New Plant Varieties," first published in 1992, is geared toward ensuring
6 that relevant scientific, safety and regulatory issues are resolved prior to introducing
7 these new plant varieties into the marketplace; and

8 **WHEREAS**, the FDA holds the position that there is no significant nutritional or
9 compositional difference between foods produced with ingredients using biotechnology
10 or genetic modification and their conventional counterparts; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the American Medical Association has reaffirmed a policy statement
12 that "...there is no scientific justification for special labeling of bio-engineered foods, as a
13 class, and that voluntary labeling is without value unless it is accompanied by focused
14 consumer education."; and

15 **WHEREAS**, meaningful food labeling includes information on nutrient content,
16 chemical composition, potential allergy concerns or potential toxicity concerns; and

17 **WHEREAS**, labeling that delivers no pertinent information about the quality and
18 safety of food, and is included solely to distinguish production methods, is not a
19 meaningful way to enhance consumer choice; and

20 **WHEREAS**, a survey conducted in 2012 by the International Food Information
21 Council (IFIC) showed most Americans remain very supportive of existing federal food-
22 labeling laws regarding foods produced with bio-engineered ingredients and that very
23 few cite biotechnology as an information need on a food label; and

24 **WHEREAS**, some consumers, food marketers, vendors, retailers and producers
25 have called for mandatory, state-imposed labeling of food products made with bio-
26 engineered ingredients that would differ from what is required by federal law; and

27 **WHEREAS**, public questions on the ballots in Colorado and Oregon in the
28 November 2014 election that, if approved, would have required labels on foods made
29 with GMO ingredients, were defeated by voters, as were ballot questions in the
30 November 2012 election in California and the state of Washington in 2013; and

31 **WHEREAS**, a bill requiring labeling of foods containing genetically modified
32 ingredients was passed in Connecticut and signed by that state’s Governor, but it will not
33 take effect until four other states pass similar laws, including one that shares a border
34 with Connecticut, and Northeastern states with a total population of 20 million people,
35 based on the 2010 Census, pass similar measures; and

36 **WHEREAS**, Maine’s legislature has passed a similar bill, but that law won’t
37 become effective until five nearby states, including New Hampshire, pass similar labeling
38 laws; and

39 **WHEREAS**, New Hampshire has a bill pending, with action expected in early-
40 2015, that would require labeling of foods made with genetically engineered ingredients
41 (although not those made from animals fed GMO feed) and would prohibit foods with
42 any GMO ingredients from being labeled “natural”; and

43 **WHEREAS**, the FDA already has guidelines, first published in 2001, to direct
44 those producers who wish to voluntarily label food products as either being produced –
45 or not produced – with bioengineered ingredients; and

46 **WHEREAS**, the National Organic Program within the USDA excludes the use of
47 bioengineered ingredients as a prerequisite to using the USDA’s “Organic” marketing
48 seal, thus providing another avenue for consumers to choose products; and

49 **WHEREAS**, because of biotechnology, pesticide use in American agriculture
50 between 1996 and 2010 has been reduced by 443 million kilograms in that time span;
51 and

52 **WHEREAS**, according to the United Nations, the world population currently
53 stands at more than 7 billion people, and by the year 2050, 9.1 billion people will inhabit
54 the planet, requiring farmers to double the annual amount of food that is produced as
55 compared to today; and

56 **WHEREAS**, efforts to feed this ever-expanding population will take all the
57 technological innovation that the world's agricultural community can muster; and

58 **WHEREAS**, this massive increase in demand for food is, in part, addressed and
59 alleviated by U.S. agricultural operators producing crops that are bio-engineered to be
60 drought-, pest- and disease-resistant, without which crop production would be greatly
61 reduced, leading to higher food costs worldwide; and

62 **WHEREAS**, pending legislation in the New Jersey Assembly and Senate would
63 create mandatory labeling of products as being made with bio-engineered products (if
64 the product contains more than 1 percent bio-engineered ingredients); and

65 **WHEREAS**, rather than a state-by-state, patchwork approach of laws regarding
66 GMO labeling, this issue would be better left to a federal measure that would apply
67 equally to all states; and

68 **WHEREAS**, legislation has been introduced in New Jersey (A-1359, S-2496, S-
69 91) which mandate the labeling of foods containing ingredients from bio-engineered
70 crops and/or animals products from livestock raised on bio-engineered feed; and

71 **WHEREAS**, a bill pending in Congress (HR-4432) would establish a voluntary
72 federal labeling standard for genetically engineered foods; and

73 **WHEREAS**, the delegates to the 99th State Agricultural Convention directed
74 Rutgers University’s New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station to create a “white
75 paper” examining the issues involved in mandatory GMO labeling.

76
77 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 100th
78 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 4-5,
79 2015, do hereby express our opposition to the bills currently pending in the New Jersey
80 Legislature (A-1359, S-2496, S-91) that aim to mandate labeling of food products as
81 being produced with bio-engineered ingredients.

82 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we believe the current federal regulations
83 regarding voluntary labeling of products as either using bio-engineered ingredients or not
84 using them are sufficient to educate consumers who are interested in this issue about
85 which products they may wish to buy.

86 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge Congress to pass HR-4432 to
87 extend voluntary labeling of foods without GMO ingredients, as we believe the issue of
88 labeling for GMO ingredients is best addressed at the federal level in order to avoid a
89 patchwork of varying regulations at the state level, which will lead to multiple packaging
90 labels needed for products that are sold in more than one state or region, potential
91 disruption to interstate commerce, and potential confusion among shoppers who cross
92 state lines to do their shopping.

93 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we commend Rutgers University’s New
94 Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) on its work to produce a summary white
95 paper examining the scientific issues associated with the use of GMOs in agricultural
96 production, including a review of scientific literature about the known health effects, if
97 any, of humans consuming foods containing GMO ingredients, and an assessment of
98 the economic impacts to farmers of requiring labeling of products containing GMO

99 ingredients and the subsequent demand for non-GMO products from farmers, which can
100 be found on-line at: [http://sebsnjaesnews.rutgers.edu/wp-](http://sebsnjaesnews.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GMO-crops-2014-BIH-final.pdf)
101 [content/uploads/2014/06/GMO-crops-2014-BIH-final.pdf](http://sebsnjaesnews.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GMO-crops-2014-BIH-final.pdf)