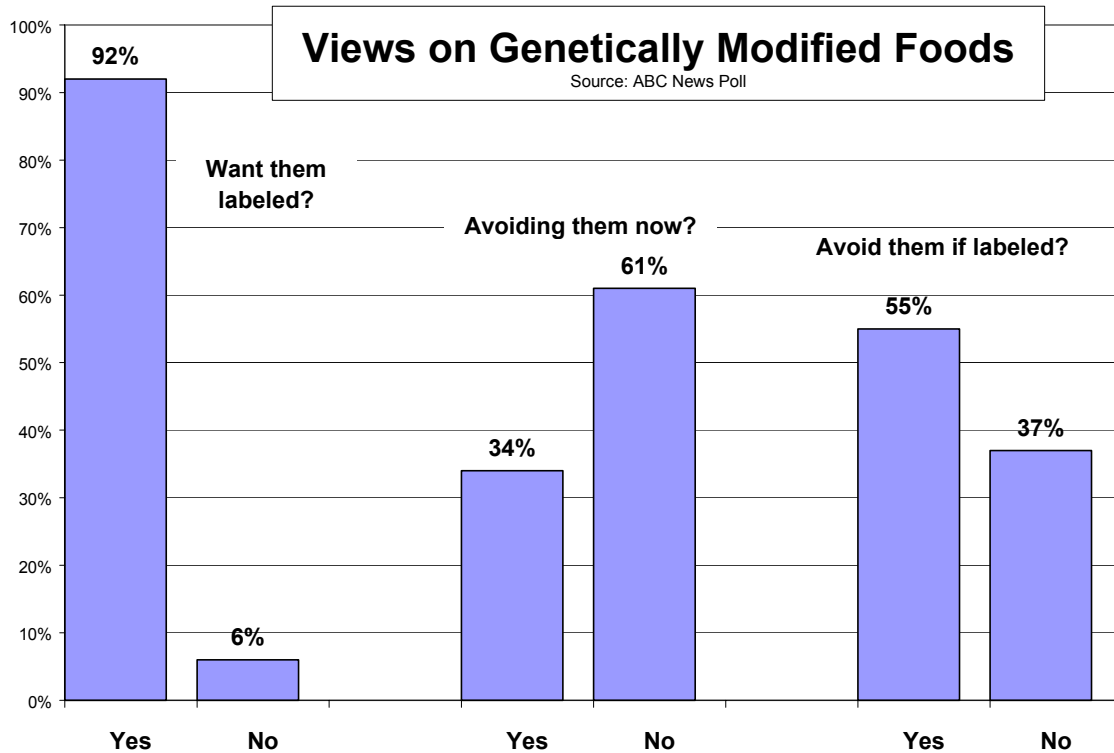


Modified Foods Give Consumers Pause

A third of Americans try to avoid buying foods that have been genetically modified or treated with antibiotics or hormones – and that resistance apparently would swell if such products were required to be labeled, as the public broadly desires.

There have been gains in the belief that genetically modified food is safe to eat – up 11 points since 2001, to 46 percent. Still, if it were labeled, 55 percent of Americans say they'd avoid such foods, including 62 percent of women, who do most food shopping.

Nearly half of adults, 47 percent, also say they'd try to avoid hormone- or antibiotic-treated food if it were labeled as such, this ABC News poll finds.



As things stand, without labels, about one-third of Americans say they try to avoid buying both kinds of foods. The rest say it's not important enough to bother.

The food industry opposes mandatory labeling, perhaps reflecting its concerns over the level of consumer resistance. But in this survey, huge majorities of Americans favor mandatory labeling – 92 percent for genetically modified foods, and 85 percent for food from farm animals that have been fed hormones or antibiotics.

On the flip side of the labeling issue, 51 percent say they're attracted to foods with labels saying they're *not* genetically modified; and 46 percent say the same for food labeled as hormone- and antibiotic-free.

SAFETY – The public divides evenly, 46-46 percent, on whether genetically modified foods are safe to eat, indicating more acceptance than two years ago, when these foods were seen as unsafe by a 52-35 percent margin.

There's also a division on food from farm animals treated with hormones or antibiotics: Forty-nine percent think they're safe, 42 percent unsafe.

Again, there's a difference by sex, with women less apt than men to say these foods are safe. Women's concerns peak specifically with gene-altered food: Fifty-four percent think it's unsafe, while 56 percent of men say the opposite. (In 2001, however, more women – 62 percent – thought bio-engineered foods were unsafe.)

	Gene-altered food		Hormone-treated	
	Safe	Unsafe	Safe	Unsafe
All	46%	46	49	42
Men	56	36	53	39
Women	37	54	45	44

More generally, nine in 10 adults think food eaten in the United States is safe, far more than say that about genetically altered or hormone-treated food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and private studies, at least one-third of U.S. crops are bio-engineered, including two-thirds of soybeans.

GROUPS – Residents of the Midwest, sometimes referred to as the Farm Belt, have a slightly more favorable view of gene-altered food; 53 percent think it's safe, compared with 39 percent in the Northeast. People who've attended college are also more likely to say altered foods are safe.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone July 9-13, 2003, among a random national sample of 1,024 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by David Morris.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll_Vault/Poll_Vault.html

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Results follow:

1. How confident are you that the food we eat in the United States is safe...very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident or not at all confident?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not confident-----			No opin.
	Net	Very	Somewhat	Net	Not very	Not at all	
7/13/03	87	39	49	12	9	3	1
11/12/97	84	27	56	16	12	4	*
8/23/97*	70	20	50	30	22	8	0

*Wirthlin

2. (HALF SAMPLE) Scientists can change the genes in some food crops and farm animals to make them grow faster or bigger and be more resistant to bugs, weeds and disease. Do you think this genetically modified food, also known as bio-engineered food, is or is not safe to eat?

	Safe	Unsafe	No opin.
7/13/03	46	46	9
6/17/01	35	52	13

3. (HALF SAMPLE) Do you think the federal government should or should not require labels on food saying whether it has been genetically modified or bio-engineered?

	Should	Should not	No opin.
7/13/03	92	6	2
6/17/01	93	6	1

4. (HALF SAMPLE) If you saw a label on food at your market saying (READ ITEM - ROTATE ORDER), would you be more likely to buy it, less likely to buy it, or would it make no difference in your buying decision?

7/13/03	More	Less	No diff.	No opin.
a. It had been genetically modified or bio-engineered	6	55	37	2
b. It had not been genetically modified or bio-engineered	51	9	39	1

Trend:

a. It had been genetically modified or bio-engineered

	More	Less	No diff.	No opin.
7/13/03	6	55	37	2
6/17/01	5	57	34	3

5. (HALF SAMPLE) Currently do you try to avoid buying genetically modified or bio-engineered foods, or is it not that important to you?

	Yes, try to avoid	No, not that important	No opin.
7/13/03	34	61	5

6. (OTHER HALF) Some livestock and poultry are fed antibiotics and hormones to make them disease resistant and faster-growing. Do you think food from farm animals that are fed antibiotics and hormones is or is not safe to eat?

	Safe	Unsafe	No opin.
7/13/03	49	42	10

7. (OTHER HALF) Do you think the federal government should or should not require labels on food saying whether it's from farm animals that have been fed antibiotics or hormones?

	Should	Should not	No opin.
7/13/03	85	11	4

8. (OTHER HALF) If you saw a label on food at your market saying (READ ITEM), would you be more likely to buy it, less likely to buy it, or would it make no difference in your buying decision?

7/13/03		More	Less	No diff.	No opin.
a. It's from farm animals that have been fed antibiotics or hormones?		4	47	45	4
b. It's from farm animals that have not been fed antibiotics or hormones?		46	7	43	3

9. (OTHER HALF) Do you try to avoid buying foods from farm animals that have been fed antibiotics or hormones, or is it not that important to you?

	Yes, try to avoid	No, not that important	No opin.
7/13/03	32	60	8

END