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Date: March 16, 2001

To: Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)  
Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: FDA Draft Guidance for Industry, Voluntary Labeling Indicating Whether Foods Have or Have Not Been Developed Using Bioengineering

Docket Number 00D-1598

The United Soybean Board (USB), the research and promotion board for the soybean farmers, is pleased to comment on FDA's Draft Guidance for Industry, Voluntary Labeling Indicating Whether Foods Have or Have Not Been Developed Using Bioengineering. As farmers, we see the benefits of agricultural biotechnology every day. These new technologies enable us to produce higher-quality crops in a way that is more efficient and better for the environment. The U.S. soybean farmers believe agricultural biotechnology holds promise for the future. Already, biotechnology allows production of foods with enhanced nutritional value and improved taste. Our hope is continued research and development will lead to more significant benefits like the ability to use foods as a delivery system for vaccines.

USB believes the current FDA policy, which requires foods made from new crops -- whether those crops are developed through traditional breeding methods or agricultural biotechnology -- to be specially labeled if the new crops differ substantially in composition, nutritional profile or safety, is sound and appropriate. (The Position of the United Soybean Board: Agricultural Biotechnology is appended to these comments.) This science-based policy creates a credible system of decision-making that relies on objective measures and is designed to protect the public's health. For example, if a food contains a serious allergen, it must be labeled so consumers will know what they are eating. If new crops are declared equivalent in composition, nutritional profile and safety, FDA maintains that special labeling of the foods produced with these crops would be misleading and, therefore, inappropriate. With numerous international scientific reports confirming the safety of the approved varieties of crops derived from biotechnology, there does not appear to be compelling health or safety reasons to change the requirements of the FDA food labeling policy.

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USB also agrees with FDA's policy that labels must be truthful and not misleading. USB supports FDA's work with consumers to determine the kinds of labeling statements that convey unbiased information to consumers. As consistent with the FDA's current policy, USB supports the use of labeling that does not cause consumers to incorrectly perceive a product as inherently better or worse than another product. This is especially important since many U.S. consumers are not fully informed of the benefits of biotechnology and may have unwarranted concerns about the safety of foods produced through the use of biotechnology.

USB believes that there are many effective ways to educate and inform consumers on foods produced through biotechnology and not use the overcrowded food label. A recent consumer survey issued by the International Food Information Council (IFIC) found 75% of consumers also believe that information about crops/foods derived from biotechnology can be provided through information such as toll-free numbers, brochures, and websites, instead of labeling.

The FDA proposed Voluntary Labeling Guidelines provide an important framework in which food manufacturers can accurately depict their products whether derived from or not derived from biotechnology and provide consumers with clear and meaningful information about the foods that they eat. Consumers need to be able to believe that statements about biotechnology on food labels are true and not misleading.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Magnus". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Doug Magnus  
Chairman, United Soybean Board



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## POSITION OF THE UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD: AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

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### POSITION STATEMENT:

*The United Soybean Board recognizes that the future of agricultural biotechnology depends upon the understanding and acceptance of consumers. As such, we advocate the responsible development of plant biotechnology in a way that provides long-term benefits to consumers, producers, and the environment. USB is committed to fostering active, open communication among consumers, producers, industry leaders, researchers, and the regulatory community in order to insure marketing opportunities for all U.S. produced soybeans and soybean products.*

### ISSUES IN AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

**Safety.** Regulatory agencies, including the FDA, EPA and USDA, have declared that approved crop varieties derived from biotechnology are safe, after completing rigorous reviews of scientific testing. The most common varieties of biotech soybeans, for example, have undergone more extensive safety and compositional testing than any crop in history. More than 1,800 scientific evaluations in the United States—including tests for allergenicity and environmental safety—have come to the same conclusion: commercially available soybeans produced through agricultural biotechnology are safe for consumers and for the environment. They are just as nutritious and safe as any other commercially available variety.

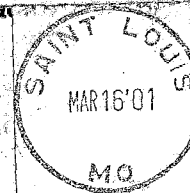
- The United Soybean Board believes that crops and products enhanced by agricultural biotechnology are safe to grow and safe to eat, as confirmed by FDA following their thorough reviews of rigorous, scientific testing.

**Labeling.** FDA's current guidelines state that food made from new crops—whether those crops are developed through traditional breeding methods or agricultural biotechnology—must be specially labeled if the new crops differ in composition, nutritional profile, or safety. If a food contains a serious allergen, for example, it must be labeled so consumers will know what they are eating. If the new crops are declared equivalent in composition, nutritional profile, and safety, FDA maintains that special labeling of the foods produced with these crops would be misleading and, therefore, inappropriate. Thanks to these regulatory and labeling practices, American consumers enjoy one of the safest food supplies in the world.

- The United Soybean Board supports a policy based upon good public health practices and sound science, which will provide consumers with clear and meaningful information about the foods they eat. The current FDA labeling guidelines are exemplary in that regard. If anyone proposes to change these labeling requirements, we would encourage that the proposed changes adhere to the same standard.

The current FDA labeling guidelines are endorsed by the EPA, USDA, food companies, soybean producers, and food processors. We maintain open lines of communication with all of these groups and work with industry partners to share vital information about biotechnology, labeling, agriculture, and soybeans in general.

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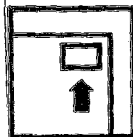
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**HOW TO USE:  
COMO USAR:**



- 1. COMPLETE ADDRESS LABEL AREA**  
Type or print required return address and addressee information.

**ESCRIBA LA DIRECCION EN EL  
AREA INDICADA**  
Escriba en letras de imprenta la dirección del remitente y la del destinatario.



- 2. PAYMENT METHOD**  
Affix postage, meter strip or PC postage label to area indicated in upper right hand corner.

**FORMA DE PAGO**  
En el área superior del lado derecho, coloque sello postal, franja de máquina franqueadora o etiqueta de franqueo impreso por computadora.



- 3. ATTACH LABEL (if provided)**  
Remove label backing and adhere where indicated.

**ADHIERA ETIQUETA (SI le fue provista)**  
Remueva la parte posterior y adhiera



**UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD**

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