

BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM POSITION ON BRAZILIAN NON-GM SOYBEAN

British Retail Consortium (BRC) members do not currently stock own label brands sourced from Genetically Modified (GM) materials and ingredients. This decision is based solely on customer demand, as the general public remains highly critical of potential health effects from consuming GM products. For this reason, UK retailers are determined to maintain a non-GM stance for products for as long as practically and commercially possible.

THE PROBLEM

GM has failed to convince

Research data from across the UK indicates that customer demand for non-GM remains as strong now as it was in the late nineties when widespread opposition first emerged. A 2003 survey by NOP World revealed the following:

- **78%** of people remain unconvinced that GM is safe to eat
- **79%** would not knowingly buy food containing GM ingredients
- Even if GM food could be proven safe to eat, **61%** of customers would still not consume these products
- **55%** were against GM food and crops with **38%** yet to be convinced of its benefits

OUR RESPONSE

Working with suppliers

In order to help suppliers of commodity crop provide non-GM soya and maize to our market, British retailers and manufacturers have worked together to produce a standard for identity-preserved systems in the supply of non-GM products, based on current best practice. The standards acts as a guide for use at appropriate points along the supply chain, from seed supply to the use of derivative ingredients in the manufacture of final food products.

Informed choice

Retailers are committed to giving their customers informed choice. Retailers support the 0.9% *de minimis* threshold for the accidental mixing of non-GM material, below which labelling will not be required. Without such a threshold to allow for such low level mixing, manufacturers and retailers would have no incentive to ensure non-GM supply lines as any error would mean presentation. That scenario would have businesses acting defensively, labelling 'containing GM' which is not what most customers want.

Maintaining Brazil's non-GM supply

It will be enormously difficult to maintain trust in the food chain should Brazil's supply of non-GM soybean dry up. It is therefore essential that Brazil remains a continued source of non-GM soybean and halts the progression at the current level of 35% GM.

We urge the Brazilian industry to resist further growth of GM planting. This would send a disastrous signal to UK consumers and could seriously damage trust and confidence in the food chain across the board.