

FDA Official: GMO Foods 'As Safe As' Other Foods

By Tim Devaney, The Hill

A top official at the Food and Drug Administration assured lawmakers Wednesday the agency has no safety concerns about the increasingly controversial production of genetically engineered foods.

Genetically modified organisms, better known as GMOs, are used by farmers to increase their crop yields. But many concerns have been raised by food safety groups about the dangers of eating foods that were scientifically altered.

Michael Landa, director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at the FDA, dismissed those claims Wednesday.

“Based on our evaluations, we are confident that the [genetically engineered foods] in the U.S. marketplace today are as safe as their conventional counterparts,” Landa **told lawmakers** during a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee **hearing**.

The FDA already regulates the use of GMOs by farmers.

But critics, including some food safety groups, are calling for the FDA to prohibit farmers from using GMOs in their crops.

Short of that, they would like food manufacturers to label products made with GMOs.

But Landa said this is not necessary, because the FDA thoroughly reviews each GMO before it hits the market.

“We do not believe that there are any questions about safety,” he emphasized.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers on the Energy and Commerce Committee **introduced** the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act earlier this year to address growing GMO concerns, but it has not gained traction in the outgoing Congress.

Lawmakers expressed skepticism about requiring food manufacturers to label GMOs.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) said mandatory labeling could be “misleading” because it might lead some consumers to believe that the government endorses the notion that GMOs are dangerous.

“I, for one, am just as convinced that [genetically engineered] plants are as safe as any other food,” Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.) said at the hearing.