



# Action guide

## Get unlabelled GM ingredients out of your local restaurants

It is illegal for caterers to use GM ingredients unless they are clearly labelled on their menus or displayed on a prominent notice. But despite this many cafes, restaurants, takeaways and pubs are routinely using GM oil in their cooking without letting their customers know. In fact, they might not even know they are doing it themselves.

Although public opposition has largely kept GM off shop shelves, GM oil is being widely sold and used throughout the UK, marketed as 'pure vegetable oil' with GM labelling in very small print. Failure to let customers know about GM ingredients can result in a fine of up to £20,000, but investigations in some areas by Trading Standards officers have shown that this isn't stopping the use of unlabelled GM.

In Norfolk, officers visited 50 catering establishments and found that over 40% of them were using either vegetable oil or mayonnaise which contained oil from genetically modified soya beans.<sup>1</sup> In York a similar investigation revealed that a quarter caterers visited were using GM cooking oil, but that 94% of them were not letting their customers know about it.<sup>2</sup>

But whilst poor quality labelling of ingredients and confusion about rules may be causing caterers to break the law, this cannot be used as an excuse to feed their customers with GM without adequate warning. Trading Standards officers in Norfolk have now provided caterers with advice on their responsibilities, and warned them that failure to take this advice will lead to more formal action. It is now important that this happens nationally so that we can keep our right to eat GM-free food.

We would like people to ask the Trading Standards office of their local authority what they are doing to make sure that caterers stick to the rules, and also to contact caterers themselves to make sure that they are aware of their legal responsibilities – see overleaf for details of how to get involved. If you would like more detailed information about GM labelling and traceability rules please see the GM Freeze briefing *GM with your chips?* at:

[http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/81C\\_GM\\_with\\_your\\_Chips\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/81C_GM_with_your_Chips_briefing.pdf)

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## Take action

### Write to your local Trading Standards office

Below is draft letter text for you to modify and send to your local Trading Standards office. To find the name and address of your nearest office please use the postcode search tool at <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/>

You can also copy the letter to the leader of your local council. You can find your local council's details at:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/index.htm>

Please send a copy of any replies you receive to Richard Hines at Friends of the Earth so we can keep track of responses and identify areas for further action.

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has been brought to my attention that genetically modified (GM) ingredients, mainly cooking oil, may be finding their way into restaurants, cafes and pubs in (*insert name of your town/county*) without customers being informed of this fact. Although I understand that it is lawful for catering establishments to use certain types of GM oil in their food, they are legally required to reveal it on the menu or on a prominent notice.

However, in some areas Trading Standards officers have found that GM ingredients are being routinely used without any form of labelling by numerous caterers. This is despite the fact that failure to comply with these labelling requirements is a criminal offence with a penalty of up to £20,000.

Please can you provide me with details and results of any investigations that have been carried out by (*insert name of local trading standards office*), and your efforts to inform businesses in (*insert name of your town/county*) of their legal obligations. If you are yet to carry out an investigation I urge you to commit to doing so in the near future.

For more information and the full text of the Business Guidance leaflet on Genetically Modified Foods', produced for caterers by Trading Standards at national level go to: <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/cgi-bin/bg/ligitem.cgi?file=badv070-1011.txt>

Yours sincerely,  
(*insert your name*)

### Contact your local catering establishments

You can also take action by asking your local restaurants and pubs if they are using GM oil. If you they are using it without displaying this information to their customers, make sure they are aware of their **legal obligations**. Urge them instead to source genuine non-GM cooking oil. If they do not give you guarantees that they will switch to non-GM, or display prominent labelling, report the incident to your Local Authority Trading Standards officer and please let us know.

1

<http://new.edp24.co.uk/content/news/story.aspx?brand=EDPOnline&category=News&tBrand=EDPOnline&tCategory=news&itemid=NOED06%20Apr%202008%2020%3A52%3A40%3A090>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.thisisyork.co.uk/display.var.1669027.0.alert\\_over\\_gm\\_foods.php](http://www.thisisyork.co.uk/display.var.1669027.0.alert_over_gm_foods.php)