

daily lives of everybody in the food chain from the farmer who will be forced to plant fence row to fence row of a crop that is less efficient to the grain elevator that will have to adjust storage options to separate the types of grain, to the manufacturer that will need different labels for different States, to the distributor that will need expanded storage for sorting, and to the retailer who may be unable to afford offering low-cost, private-label products, and, finally, to the consumer who will be forced to pay for all this additional cost to the tune of \$82 billion.

Now we come to our final task as elected officials of this body taking a vote. But before we do, we should all know that never before—never before in my experience as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and all the years I have had the privilege to serve on both committees—we have never seen a bill in the Agricultural Committee with so much support, never. Over 800 organizations all across the food and agriculture perspective have a stake in this bill. It is at the national and State and local levels. They all support the bill. The bill has the support of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the American Farm Bureau, and many, many more.

Virtually every farm group is in town. I just talked to the American Soybean Association this past week. One farmer said: Hey, if I cannot have agriculture biological crops with regard to increasing the yield that I plant, what am I going to do? Am I going to plant fence row to fence row? Am I going to lose in this situation when farming income is declining and farm credit is getting tighter?

The fundamental role of the Agriculture Committee is to protect American farmers and ranchers who provide a safe, abundant, and affordable food supply to a very troubled and hungry world. So I will be voting yes to do just that, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Voting no today means telling your constituents next week that you are raising their grocery bill by over \$1,000. Good luck with that.

It is a pretty simple vote. You are either for agriculture or you are not.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, later this morning we continue to work on whether to consider a food labeling bill here in the Senate. As a dad, I know this bill is about much more than just words or symbols or a label. It is about the confidence we have in the food we eat and the food we feed our children. As a Hoosier, I also know this bill is about preserving confidence in a long and proud Indiana tradition of growing the food that feeds our communities and provides a safe and reliable food supply for the world. Whether you are a parent or a farmer, a Republican or a

Democrat, our objectives in this debate should be the same: to provide consumers with access to accurate information about the food we eat and to do so in a way that does not mislead consumers into falsely thinking their food is unsafe.

I believe strongly that consumers, our families, our kids, moms and dads, brothers and sisters deserve to feel confident in the food we feed our families. I want to know how much sugar is in my ice cream and how many calories are in that roast beef sandwich that I love so much. It is clear from this debate that many Americans want to know even more about where and how our food is produced. I believe we should have that information, and it should be easy to find.

It is also common sense. This information should be delivered in a way that is fair, that is objective, and that is based in sound science. I have heard from many Hoosier farmers who are very concerned that some labels or symbols on packages would amount, in consumers' minds, to warning labels and could send a misleading message that the safe and healthy products our farmers grow—think of sweet corn in our fields—are somehow unhealthy or even dangerous.

This morning, my good friend, Senator TOM CARPER from Delaware, and I filed an amendment that builds off the framework of the proposal before us today. A framework I first suggested in the Agriculture Committee markup of this very bill. It creates a national voluntary bioengineered food labeling standard. It stipulates that if food companies fail to make sufficient information available, then a national food labeling standard for bioengineering becomes mandatory.

Our amendment works for farmers, it works for manufacturers, and it works for our families. It establishes ambitious goals for the availability of information related to bioengineering by requiring that after 3 years, 80 percent of the food products covered by the legislation would provide direct access to information. If the food industry does not meet this threshold, then the labeling requirement becomes mandatory.

Our amendment also requires clear and direct access to information on bioengineering. This could include explicit disclosures, such as organic or GMO-free, or voluntarily disclosing bioengineering on the box. Or companies choosing to participate in the voluntary program could use various electronic methods of disclosure, such as a Web site or a QR code in conjunction with a phone number that clearly indicates to consumers—to our families—where they can find more information and provides direct access to that information. This is important because our shared goal is to provide direct access to information about the contents of our food to everyone, whether you have access to the Internet or a smartphone or a regular phone. So let me repeat: Our amendment allows for

electronic disclosure to be used only in conjunction with a phone number, and both methods would have to provide direct access to information on the product's contents.

Finally, our amendment preserves State consumer protection laws and remedies. States write laws to protect our citizens from mislabeled products and to provide for remedies in case of false or misleading statements. Our amendment preserves those laws.

Consumers, our families, farmers, and food producers are looking to the Senate for leadership. After months of discussion, we have been unable to agree yet on a proposal that gives consumers the information they want in a responsible way, but the issue remains. This will be another week of uncertainty for producers, for manufacturers, for our families who do not have the information they want, and for the producers and manufacturers I mentioned who don't know what is expected.

I am going to continue to work on this issue with Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW. I strongly encourage all my colleagues to consider the ideas that Senator CARPER and I have put forward and to try to work with us to find a solution that works for America.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I am rising to speak to this issue from a simple American citizen point of view. The American citizen wants the right to know what is in their food. They want to know how many calories; they want to know what the minerals and the vitamins are and what the ingredients are. It is a simple standard because it is important to an individual to know what you are putting in your mouth, what you are putting on the table for your families and your children.

This is a principle that we have honored time and again on our packages. We proceeded to put on our packages whether fish is farm raised or wild caught because citizens wanted to know. It makes a difference to them. It is their choice. It is their judgment. We put on our packages whether juice is from concentrate or is fresh because citizens wanted to know. It is important to them. It is their right to know.

We put the list of ingredients on the package in a simple format, not so that someone can spend an hour trying to research what is in it. No, we have a simple 1-second test. You pick up the food off the counter, you turn it over, you look at the list of ingredients and you say, this has the vitamin C I wanted; this has the calories I wanted—the 1-second test.

That is what is at stake because the bill that is before us right now kills the 1-second test. It kills immediate access to information for consumers. It says