

## Hunting for GMO

Genetic engineers inject the genes of bacteria, plants, and animals into numerous organisms and substances. According to "GMO-Compass", there are 83 genetically modified plants. Among the most modified are soy, corn and potatoes. Modification yields qualities that never existed before. For example, when soy genes are injected with seaweed genes, they contain more fat. And when wheat gets the scorpion genes, it becomes resistant to droughts. There is a lot of discussion of the dangers of GMO, but the main arguments of their opponents all over the world is that it is unclear how genetically modified products will affect upcoming generations.

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**As of the beginning of this year, every single product must be marked "Contains GMO" or "No GMO." Now this is a legal requirement. Do they write the truth on packages?**

The law was ratified by 375 out of 450 deputies in parliament. Communists and the Lytvyn Bloc voted in favor of it. Twenty-five supporters of Tymoshenko did not vote in favor of it. Among them was Yevhen Sihal, the creator of "Havrylivski Kurchata", and Oleh Babayev, who used to head "Kremenchukm'yaso", one of Ukraine's biggest producers of meat and sausage products. The Party of Regions had 23 deputies that did not vote for it, and in Our Ukraine – People's Self Defense – 12.

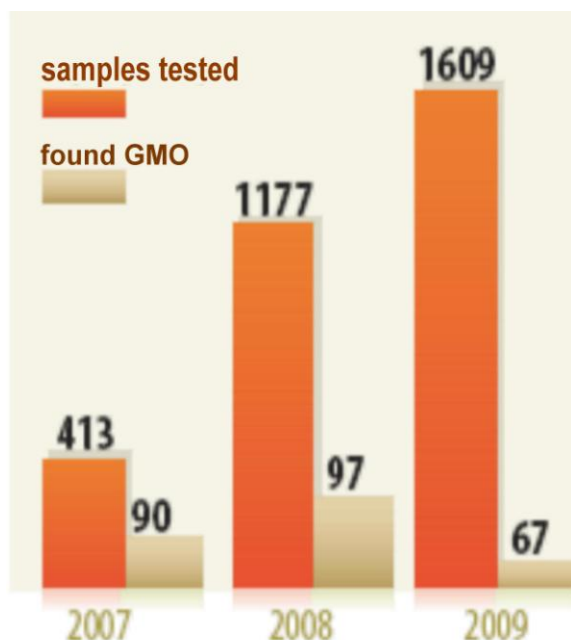


Chart 1

In reality, product markings about GMO contents must be on every product since last July. The Tymoshenko government ratified such a requirement (in 2007, a similar idea was first ratified, but later cancelled, by the Yanukovych government). Right after Tymoshenko’s order was enacted, our sources found out that there was no actual control from the state consumer standard committee over whether this requirement was fulfilled or not, because the government did not allocate money for laboratory tests.

In the last half year, store shelves have been filled up with more and more products with green marks “no GMO”. However, this is what they write on the package, but does anyone control what is actually inside? This is what we managed to find out.

## PRODUCTS IN WHICH THEY FOUND GMO (Source: Central laboratory Ukrmetrteststandart)

	2007	2008	2009
	-	-	2
	22	5	1
	4	2	2
	24	11	-
	13	3	5

Chart 2

## Did controls improve?

Positive finding #1. The state consumer standard committee’s number of laboratories where they test products for GMO increased. Half a year ago, there were only five laboratories, while now there are 13 across Ukraine.

Negative finding #1. No money has yet been allocated for testing. “Guess how much money we got for testing in 2009? Zero,” said our source. All the research was conducted by the producers themselves, and at their own cost. Therefore, the results of the tests (including information on the products where GMO was found) belong to the producers.

This means that the information is was made public.

Can we trust the mark “No GMO” on products that are sold in our stores?

Positive finding #2. More and more companies are willingly, and at their own cost, testing their own products and raw produce for GMO. This is the data provided by the central laboratory of “Ukrmetrteststandart” in Kyiv (see Chart 1). This table shows that the list of products and raw produce being tested is increasing, but also that the amount of samples where GMO is found is decreasing.

Of course this does not mean that GMO is decreasing in the products that are tested. Laboratory employees confess that very few products are tested. “80% of all of tests are on raw produce and ingredients from which they make products. The rest is ready-finished products. It is better to test for GMO in the ingredients than to hunt for GMO later,” said Ruslan Holubets, head of the central laboratory. Therefore, the majority of products that we consume are not tested by either the government or producers. This is negative finding #3.

For three years, the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine could not compile a list of products that can contain GMO, even though such information would be very valuable to consumers. Such lists have long existed and are freely available in the global database of “GMO-Compass” (it includes 85 products and beverages). “If you are interested, I can find the report on products where we found GMO in the last three years,” said the head of the central laboratory while scrolling the mouse on his work computer and printing out the test results (see Chart 2). According to the laboratory, GMO components in products come from the U.S.A., the Netherlands, Argentina, Russia, China, Spain, Israel and Ukraine. Here are the possible ingredients that can contain GMO (they are listed on the product packaging) – see Chart 3.

## **Is there GMO in pelmeni and kovbasa?**

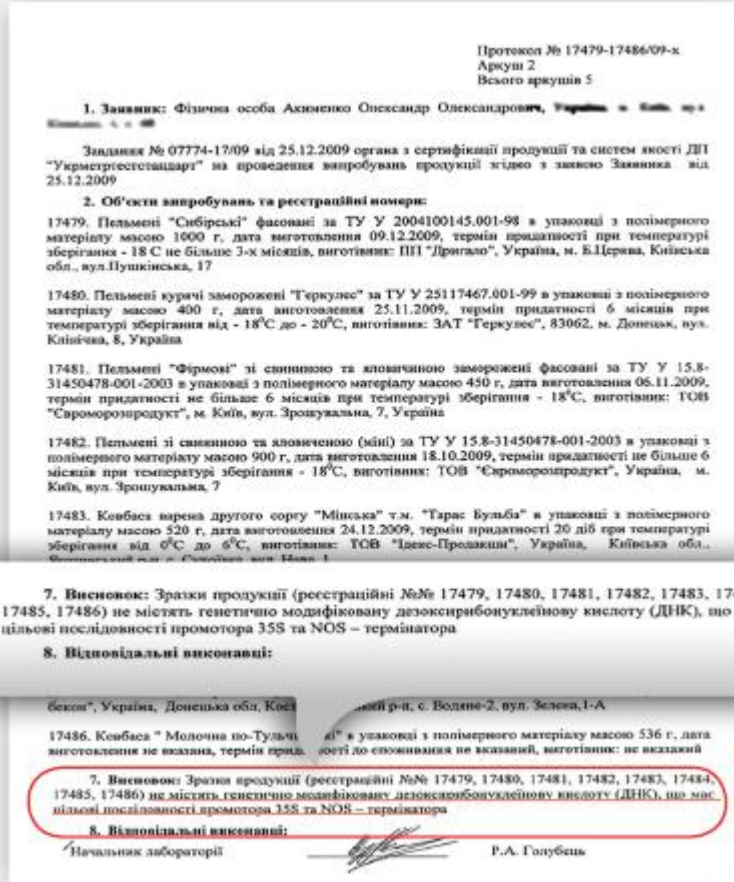
Here is positive finding #3. Since the government did not do it, we decided to do it ourselves and tested some of the most popular products for GMO. Such tests are not cheap. Every test costs 630 hryvnias. We went to SCOOP, the international organization supporting investigative reporting, for help. It financed the tests. We chose pelmeni and kovbasa for testing on purpose since usually they are the most frequent products containing soy proteins that include GMO.

Showcases with kovbasa in two popular supermarket chains where we decided to purchase our products were not very informative. There were multiple rows of kovbasa. The tags had only the names and prices. Very rarely did tags contain quality grades. There were no markings about GMO contents. Only a few of the packages of boiled kovbasa and pelmeni had the marking “No GMO”.

We bought four kinds of kovbasa and four packages of pelmeni. The must criterion was the marking on the packaging about soy protein as one of the ingredients (this component is in the risk group). Here are the names:

- “Sibirski” pelmeni, “Dryhalo” private company (Kyiv)
- “Herkules” pelmeni with chicken frozen, “Herkules” closed joint stock company (Donetsk)
- “Try Vedmedi” pelmeni, “Evromorozprodukt” joint stock company (Kyiv)
- “Prodzapas” pelmeni, “Evromorozprodukt” joint stock company (Kyiv)
- “Minska” boiled kovbasa, second quality grade, “Taras Bulba” trademark (Kyiv oblast, Yahotynskiy region)
- “Doktorska Nova” boiled kovbasa, first quality grade, “Kolos” private company (Chernivtsi)
- “Doktorska Plus” boiled kovbasa, first quality grade, “Ukrayinskiy Bekon” private company (Donetsk oblast, Kostyantyniv region)

- “Po-Tulchynski” milk kovbasa, “Tulchyn” trademark (Vinnitsya oblast, Tulchyn)



### Report on product testing for GMO

All of these products were delivered to the central laboratory of “Ukrmetrteststandart”. They promised to give us the results in a week.

Thus, at the arranged time, the department of document issuance provided us with the verdict. The document on the official letterhead of “Ukrmetrteststandart” states, “The samples of the products do not include genetically modified deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).” So all of those are without GMO. Such is the conclusion. It refers only to four kinds of pelmeni and kovbasa – this is not a total checkup of all products consumed.

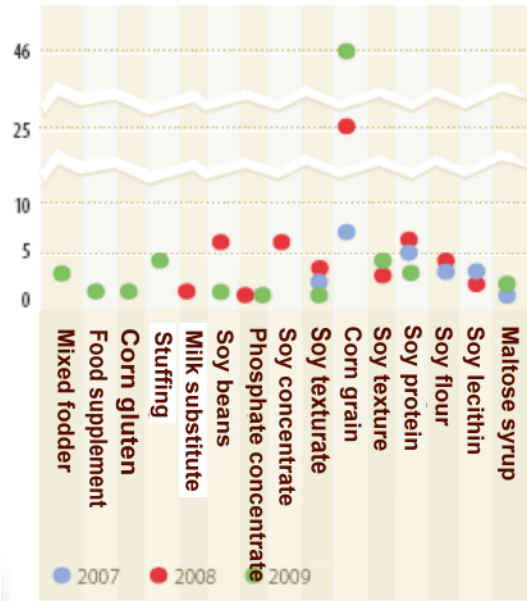


Chart 3

Author: According to "GMO-Compass", 83 plants are already genetically modified