

How We Define “Non-GMO Sourced”

At Unilever, we recognize that some people have questions about food ingredients made from genetically engineered agricultural crops, also referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). We also recognize that some people have a preference for foods made to specific production standards that do not use ingredients produced from GMO crops. In an effort to better meet these consumers’ preferences, we offer a selection of products made with “Non-GMO Sourced” ingredients.

Background

In the United States, we rely on American farmers to produce most of the agricultural raw materials used to make our products. US farmers widely use GMO seeds to produce five major agricultural crops that are commonly used for food ingredients: corn, soy, canola, cottonseed and sugar beet. Therefore if a US food product contains ingredients that come from one or more of those five agricultural crops and is not labeled organic or labeled with information on non-GMO sourcing, it is likely to have ingredients from GMO crops.

GMO crops and ingredients from these crops have been safely used for more than 20 years. The regulatory agencies and leading scientific bodies that study the safety of our food supply have found that these GMO crops and food ingredients from these crops are as safe as their traditional counterparts. At the same time, according to many experts, these crops could play an important role in helping meet the long-term food needs of the world in a more sustainable way.

Our Definitions

When we refer to “Non-GMO Sourced,” we are using “GMO” as the term most widely used and understood in the US, though there are varying definitions. As such, a genetically modified organism (GMO) is an organism in which the genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur through traditional cross-breeding methods in order to introduce new traits or characteristics.

“Non-GMO Sourced” refers to non-GMO according to the original crop source. This would include a crop that either is not commercially available as a GMO crop in the US or, if the option is available, is the non-GMO version of such crop. Traceability to the original non-GMO crop source is the key to our ingredient sourcing standard.

Our "Non-GMO Sourced" Standards

Unilever’s Non-GMO Source standard adheres to sourcing Non-GMO ingredients according to the original crop source. This means we rely primarily on traceability of ingredients through the supply chain back to a non-GMO crop, rather than relying on specific test methods such as PCR testing¹ on the ingredients we procure.

We adhere to the following guidelines to ensure the integrity of our “Non-GMO Sourced” products:

- Our products are not made or grown from food or seed that has been knowingly or intentionally produced with genetic engineering.

- Measures have been taken to segregate and avoid knowing or intentional commingling with food and other ingredients that may have been produced with genetic engineering.
- Suppliers must use “Non-GMO Sourced” ingredients in the manufacture of items they supply.
- For any plant-based raw material derived from sugar beets, corn, soy, canola, or other crop that is commercially available in GMO varieties, suppliers must source “Non-GMO” materials.
- “Non-GMO Sourced” also applies to crops for which there are no commercially grown GMO varieties, such as tea and olives.
- Suppliers and factories that also handle GMO raw materials or finished products in their production facilities must take appropriate measures to minimize cross-contact between GMO and non-GMO materials. These measures may include proper cleaning, flushing and segregation.
- Suppliers will be evaluated for “Non-GMO Sourced” traceability and production measures as part of our routine non-GMO ingredient review procedures. Supportive documentation review, site visits, and PCR testing for verification at any point in the supply chain, all may be part of the audit protocol. Suppliers must provide documentation and confirmation that materials are “Non-GMO Sourced.”
- Our Non-GMO Sourced guidelines for suppliers do not apply to processing aids or ingredients that can be produced with the help of genetically modified organisms in fermentation processes, such as enzymes and vitamins. The appropriateness of using such processing aids and ingredients is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Any eggs, dairy, meat or poultry that we use in our products may come from animals that consume feed produced from GMO crops, which is common practice in the US. In line with regulations in most countries and states with GMO labeling requirements, including the European Union and Vermont, our Non-GMO Sourced guidelines for suppliers do not apply to animal feed.
- Products making an “organic” claim do not use GMOs as they are produced and certified in accordance with the USDA National Organic Program which does not allow GMOs.