Program:

WARNING: THIS FOOD LABEL MAY CAUSE CONFUSION
Process Labeling of Food: Consumer Behavior, the Agricultural Sector, and Policy Recommendations

~ AND ~

BIOTECHNOLOGY—GREAT POTENTIAL STIFLED BY GOOD INTENTIONS
Arresting Application of Genetic Engineering Solutions

October 5, 2015
PROGRAM

Welcome and Introduction

DR. TYRONE SPADY
NATIONAL C-FAR REPRESENTATIVE

Distinguished Speakers

DR. KENT D. MESSER
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

~AND~

DR. KEVIN FOLTA
CHAIRMAN, HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Open Forum

Closing

DR. TYRONE SPADY

NATIONAL C-FAR IS a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com.
CAST ISSUE PAPER-PROCESS LABELING

ABSTRACT
Consumers are frequently exposed to labels communicating specific processing aspects of food production. At the root of this phenomenon are the desires for individual control and a diffuse distrust in the safety and health of the food produced by modern agriculture. These desires are paired with concerns about the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of food production. Under appropriate third-party or governmental oversight, these “process labels” can effectively bridge the informational gap between producers and consumers, satisfy consumer demand for broader and more stringent quality assurance criteria, and ultimately create value for both consumers and producers. Despite these potential benefits, process labeling often has serious unintentional consequences. For instance, labeling the benefits of a process for a new niche product can implicitly cast the conventionally produced product in a negative light. This type of stigmatization of the conventional product can be particularly problematic in situations in which no scientific evidence exists that the food produced with the conventional process causes harm, or even that it is compositionally any different. Potential unintended consequences of process labeling are increasing food prices, inducing unsubstantiated quality expectations for the newly labeled products, and stunting scientific and technological advances in agriculture. This CAST Issue Paper examines what is known regarding consumer reaction to process labels, identifies the legal framework for process labeling, and ultimately provides policy recommendations that highlight when process labeling is beneficial or harmful to the agricultural sector and the people who eat the food it produces.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY
Kent D. Messer, Ph.D., is the Unidel H. Cosgrove Professor in the Department of Applied Economics and Statistics and the Director of the Center for Experimental and Applied Economics at the University of Delaware. He also is the co-Director of the new USDA-funded national Center for Behavioral and Experimental Agri-Environmental Research (CBEAR). His research interests include the behavioral response to food risks and the interface between agriculture and the environment. Messer obtained his B.S. at Grinnell College in anthropology, his M.S. in resource policy and behavior at the University of Michigan, and his Ph.D. in resource economics at Cornell University.
BIOTECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND FOOD SCIENCE

ABSTRACT

While the technologies thought of as "genetic engineering" have been used for the last 30 years in medicine and 20 years in agriculture without incident, these tools are much maligned in the public discussion. These technologies have shown to be helpful to farmers, keep food affordable and even have had environmental benefits that outweigh their limitations. New technologies are poised to expand the utility of these tools to more people, especially in the developing world. While discussion of this science has dominated the public discourse, there is little science being discussed. TV chefs, Oz doctors, and Food Babes profit from propagating misinformation and fear, constructing compelling narratives that are thin on facts and soft on science. Scientists that attempt to correct the record are attacked and harassed with abuse of documents obtained through public records requests. This problem means that scientists are reluctant to participate in the discussion, leaving the conversation to be a contentious sniping between activists and corporations. Future policy decisions must be based on science, and our policymakers must connect better with the scientific community to sort the reality from fiction in discussions around this key topic.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Kevin Folta, Ph.D, is a professor in and chairman of the Horticultural Sciences Department at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He got his Ph.D. in Molecular Biology from University of Illinois at Chicago in 1998, and he has worked at University of Wisconsin before settling in at University of Florida. Dr. Folta researches the functional genomics of small fruit crops, the plant transformation, the genetic basis of flavors, and studies at photomorphogenesis and flowering. He has also written many publications and edited books, most recently was the 2011 Genetics, Genomics, and Breeding of Berries. Dr. Folta received the NSF CAREER Award, an HHMI Mentoring Award and was recognized as "University of Florida Foundation Research Professor" in 2010.
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