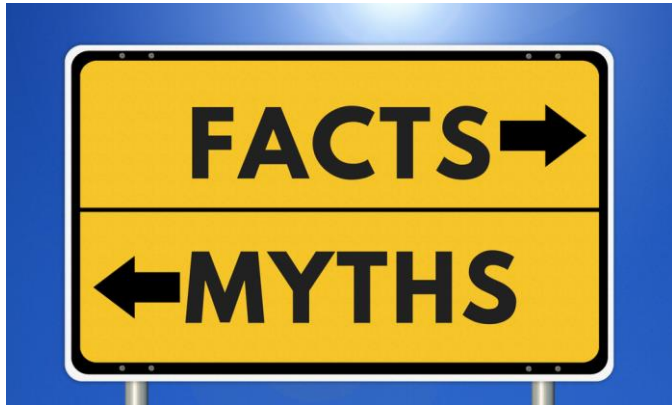




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Current food trends suggest there is confusion about the safety of the food system (production, processing distribution, consumption and waste management) leading to skepticism and decreased consumer confidence in our food supply.

Consumers are faced with many food decisions based on growing practices, preparation, convenience and economic



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factors. The majority of people in the United States are two or more generations removed from production agriculture and direct knowledge of the overall food system.

Two words that get tossed around a lot concerning food are “hormones” and “GMOs” (genetically modified organisms, often referred to as genetically modified or genetically engineered food). Whatever your beliefs about these food characteristics, here are

some facts you should know before you choose one food over another because it has a “free of” claim.

Foods Marketed as Hormone Free

Before discussing hormones in foods, it is important to make a distinction between “free of hormones” and “no hormones added” or “raised without hormones.”



Anything that is or has been alive contains hormones, including plants.

Anything that is or has been alive contains hormones, including plants. There is no such thing as “hormone free” meat or animal products. Products from animals will contain hormones regardless of whether the animal was administered growth-promoting hormones.

Federal law prohibits the use of growth hormones in poultry production. Today’s birds are larger due to advances in breeding, animal nutrition and animal care.

Likewise, federal law prohibits the use of growth hormones in pig production. The amount of lean meat produced per pig has increased due to animal selection and nutrition.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, “Hormones are not allowed in raising hogs or poultry. Therefore, the claim ‘no hormones added’ cannot be used on the labels of pork or poultry unless it is followed by a statement that says

‘Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones.’”

Be aware, the claim may be in much larger letters than the statement saying the use of hormones is prohibited.

Foods Marketed as GMO-free or Non-GMO

In today’s market place, you may find foods promoted as “GMO free” or “contains no GMOs.” Before you pay extra for this food, be aware it may not be made with any ingredients that contain GMOs in the first place. In other words, the same type of food without that label may also be free of GMO ingredients.



Before you pay extra for a food promoted as “GMO free,” be aware it may not be made with any ingredients that contain GMOs in the first place.

At present, in the U.S., the only crops available — or soon-to-be available — in a genetically modified or engineered version are corn (field and sweet), soybeans, cotton, canola, alfalfa, sugar beets, papaya (Hawaiian), squash, Arctic Apples (will be available in some areas by 2017), Innate Potato (not currently available to consumers) and Aquabounty Salmon (not currently available to consumers). NOTE: Not all versions of these foods are genetically engineered.

Before being placed on the market, genetically modified foods must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The World Health Organization cites the following factors that are taken into account before a genetically modified food is approved.

“The safety assessment of GM foods generally focuses on:

- a) direct health effects (toxicity);
- b) potential to provoke allergic reaction (allergenicity);
- c) specific components thought to have nutritional or toxic properties;
- d) the stability of the inserted gene;
- e) nutritional effects associated with genetic modification; and
- f) any unintended effects which could result from the gene insertion.”

References:

- Marathon County, University of Wisconsin-Extension. Debunking Common Myths About Animal Agriculture at <http://bit.ly/2jIagLO>
- USDA/Food Safety & Inspection Service. Meat and Poultry Labeling Terms at <http://bit.ly/2hxeMON>
- Best Food Facts. What Foods Are Genetically Modified? at <http://bit.ly/2k3uMHK>
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