

the right track so that we might be where we are today.

As I continuously reflect on my own experience, the daughter of poor immigrants from Mexico, first generation and low income and a child that the original ESEA was meant to serve, I ask my colleagues, let's work together and pass a bill that really helps our children.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, as a subcommittee chair of the Committee on Agriculture, I am committed to safe and affordable food.

In recent years, there has been increased interest in where our food comes from and how it is grown. In my view, this movement is long overdue, as far too many Americans are removed from the family farm for several generations.

Agriculture is the backbone of rural America, and its success is critical for local economies and to deliver a product every American needs on a daily basis.

With a growing world demand for food and less Americans engaged in farming, science and innovation have become essential components of agriculture and remain paramount to meet increased demands.

Aside from tractors, combines, and physical technology, innovation also extends to biotechnology. Biotech ensures that America will always have the safest, most abundant, and affordable food supply.

As world populations continue to increase, producing more food on less land will be an ongoing challenge, but one that can be addressed through advances in biotechnology.

With this in mind, there has been an ongoing debate and much attention to what have been dubbed GMOs, or genetically modified organisms, seeds or crops.

Despite the alarmist claims of some, GM products, GM seeds, have provided great benefits to farmers, ranchers, food producers, and consumers.

For instance, some varieties of GM seeds have been engineered to host genetic traits that resist certain types of insects, molds or diseases that destroy crops or, in other cases, GM seeds allow for longer growing seasons or greater crop yields.

GM crops have had an enormously positive impact on farmers, ranchers, and food producers. GM seeds have also had a positive environmental impact because they have reduced the need for large-scale sprays or open-range distribution of pesticides or insecticides.

While some continue to question the safety of consuming GM seeds, the overwhelming consensus among the various credible scientific organiza-

tions, such as the National Academy of Sciences, the World Health Organization, and the American Medical Association, remains.

Quite simply, there is no sound scientific evidence that such crops or foods are harmful to human health or the environment.

In fact, a January 2015 study from the Pew Research Center found that 88 percent of surveyed scientists believe that GM seeds or crops are perfectly safe for human consumption.

However, one of the real challenges that has developed regarding GM foods is the lack of a fair and consistent regulatory structure.

Recently several States have made attempts to mandate all GM foods are labeled as genetically modified organisms. As a result, a patchwork of different State laws have begun to emerge over the labeling requirements of GM foods.

Now, this is already causing confusion as to how such labeling standards would directly apply to farmers, ranchers, food processors and, yes, also regulators.

This patchwork of State laws could also create some constitutional questions, should such laws affect interstate commerce and trade.

Nearly 80 percent of the food produced in the United States contains some kind of GM product, and the implications of a State-by-State labeling requirement would be vast.

□ 1030

This week, Mr. Speaker, the House will consider H.R. 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015, in an effort to address this confusion. Because there are so many myths surrounding this debate, let's start with what the bill does.

This legislation is squarely centered on State labeling efforts. While the bill does preclude States from enacting their own GM labeling laws, it also creates a Federal framework for pre-market review and labeling of GM foods; or, in other words, the legislation requires the FDA to conduct a review of any and all new plant or seed varieties before such products are commercially available.

The bill would also require standards for defining whether a product is of the "GM" or "natural." The legislation does not prohibit States from outright banning GM crops or writing new relevant laws, but what the bill will do is give farmers, ranchers, and food producers much-needed certainty by establishing a unified and clear regulatory process.

Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of H.R. 1599, I rise in support of the legislation, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on it.

CALLING FOR THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE DEATH OF SANDRA BLAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I stand in the well of the United States House of Representatives today to call to the attention of the Nation the death of Ms. Sandra Bland, something that has been widely published. Videos have been shown. People can draw their own conclusions. But I stand here today because I want to announce that I join the many requesting that the Justice Department impose a thorough investigation—a thorough investigation.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who contend that the Justice Department should not look into this death. I differ. The district attorney, himself, in Waller County—this is where she died—the district attorney, himself, is looking into this and has said the death will be treated as a murder investigation.

A person who is stopped for a minor traffic violation should not end up dead. I think we should all agree that the basic premise is that, if you are stopped for a minor traffic violation, even if you are taken into custody, you should not be found dead in your jail cell.

It is said that she died from self-inflicted asphyxiation, a very polite way to say that she committed suicide. Under these questionable circumstances, the district attorney investigated. It is said that the FBI is looking into it. It is said that local constabulary will look into it in the State of Texas.

Why not have the Justice Department look into it? This is what the Justice Department is for, to look into these questionable circumstances of which too many have occurred as of late and, quite frankly, over a substantial period of time in our country. So this is a questionable case, and I believe this is a case ripe for the Justice Department to investigate.

I want to let the family know—and by the way, I don't know them. I didn't know Ms. Bland. I have no association with them. This is not about her ethnicity, and it is not about her gender. But I want the family to know that I am in sympathy with them, and I feel a certain amount of pain. I cannot feel their pain, but I feel a certain amount of pain because I believe that, if I had a daughter and if my daughter were arrested for a minor traffic violation or as a result of an initial stop for a minor traffic violation and my daughter was found dead in a jail cell some time thereafter with an allegation of suicide, I would want that case investigated, and I believe most people of goodwill would want to see an investigation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am addressing those who contend that there should be no Justice Department investigation. I have great sympathy for this family—I want you to know that—and I believe there ought to be such an investigation. If this case isn't ripe for a Justice Department investigation, I am not sure that we can conjure up in our