

# U.S. Flavor Industry Has Voice Heard in Nation's Capitol

## FEMA takes its advocacy efforts to Capitol Hill

Nicole Urbanowicz, Associate Editor; nurbanowicz@allured.com

Flavor industry members gathered in Washington, DC, on June 18 with the aim of increasing the flavor industry's profile on Capitol Hill and to promote the Flavor Extract Manufacturer Association's (FEMA) legislative strategy.

During the morning policy briefing of FEMA's first "Flavors on the Hill Congressional Fly-in," Christopher "Kip" Gibson, president of FEMA and vice president and regional manager—North America at International Flavors & Fragrances Inc. (IFF), said: "This is clearly an important event for us and I'm really glad we've got such a great turnout. Hopefully the ranks will swell as we do this, hopefully, on an annual basis going forward. You have to start somewhere and ... the success of an event like this is going to be measured over years. We're here to build a foundation, get some relationships going, understand whom to talk to and how to communicate [our message] with them to get the word out."

The event participants included employees of 3E Company, Bacardi-Martini Product Development, Bell Flavors & Fragrances Inc., Citrus and Allied Essences Ltd., The Coca-Cola Company, ConAgra Foods, FEMA, Firmenich, Flavor & Fragrance Specialties, FONA International Inc., Givaudan, Grocery Manufacturers Association, IFF, Kalsec Inc., Kellogg Company, The KWT Company, Mane Inc., Mars Inc., McCormick & Co., Mondelēz International, National Flavors, Ottens Flavors, Prova Inc., Symrise Inc., Synergy Flavors, Takasago International Corp. and Wild Flavors Inc.



*Kip Gibson (IFF) speaks at a morning policy meeting during FEMA's first "Flavors on the Hill Congressional Fly-in."*

"We all, as individual companies, are part of the constituencies of various representatives ... [and] senators," said Gibson. "We all provide employment, generate taxable revenue and operate in different ways in our respective businesses."

Gibson added that the flavor industry has a close connection and relationship with the food and beverage manufacturers of the United States.

"That [relationship] represents a significant, nearly \$1-trillion piece of the economy," Gibson said. "That provides jobs, provides taxable revenue [and] is an engine of growth to the GDP [gross domestic product] of this country. So legislation and efforts that work against flavor and food and beverages work against the economy. That should make [FEMA's efforts] important to representatives on a national, economic and total prosperity basis."

Gibson's comment came as FEMA voiced its support of the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2014, which was introduced by Reps. Mike Pompeo, R-Kan. and G.K. Butterfield, R-N.C. The bill, HR 4432, would require the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve all new genetically modified organism (GMO) ingredients before they are brought to market and would set a federal standard for the labeling of natural foods.

The bill, which was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on April 9, 2014, defines bioengineered



*Michael Gruber (Grocery Manufacturers Association) speaks about progress made in the ongoing biotech and GMO labeling debate.*

<http://dyson.cornell.edu/people/profiles/docs/LabelingNY.pdf>

organisms as “a plant or any part of a plant which contains genetic material that has been modified through in vitro recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) techniques when such modification could not otherwise be obtained using conventional breeding techniques.” It also authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to require the label of such food to “disclose a material difference between food produced from, containing, or consisting of a bioengineered organism and its comparable marketed food, as necessary to protect health and safety or to prevent the label or labeling of such food from being false or misleading.”

The Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act also “preempts any state or local requirement respecting a bioengineered organism intended for a food use or application, or food produced from, containing, or consisting of a bioengineered organism.” In addition, it “preempts any state and local labeling requirements with respect to bioengineered food” and “preempts any state or local regulations that are not identical to the requirements of this act.”

In regards to GMO labeling, FEMA members in the congressional meetings spoke about how a patchwork of GMO labeling laws throughout the 50 states would potentially increase costs for manufacturers, mislead consumers, raise the price of groceries for American families and do nothing to advance food safety.



*From left: Mary Raukko (Firmenich), Lorna Hopkinson (IFF), Matthias Guentert (Symrise), Catherine Herman (Flavor & Fragrance Specialties), Kip Gibson (IFF), Sen. Corey Booker (D-NJ), Joanne Ferrara (ConAgra Foods) and Kevin Renskers (Takasago).*

*P&F* followed the Capitol Hill office visits of FEMA’s New Jersey members, which comprised company representatives from ConAgra Foods, IFF, Symrise, Flavor & Fragrance Specialties, Firmenich and Takasago. This group visited the offices of Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., Rep. Scott Garrett, R-N.J.,





From left: Sarah Codrea (FEMA), Catherine Herman (Flavor & Fragrance Specialties), Joanne Ferrara (ConAgra Foods), Kevin Renskers (Takasago) and Lorna Hopkinson (IFF) discuss key points ahead of their meetings on Capitol Hill.

Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J. and Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J.

“A significant portion of the flavor and fragrance industry is located in New Jersey and your constituents here all represent facets of the industry or companies that have facilities in New Jersey, so they all have a stake in the state,” said Gibson, who was nominated as one of the group leaders.

Gibson continued: “Everything that we’re about is science, safety, innovation and providing opportunities for consumers to make good choices, and this has been the focus of our association [FEMA], which was founded around 105 years ago. We have a long-standing record of collaboration with the government on common areas of interest in order to maintain that integrity that we project on behalf of our members.”

Gibson also spoke about the GMO labeling law.

“Our concern is about making sure there’s consistent, scientific-based informative legislation that will give the consumer something that’s meaningful,” he said. “And further, there should be one standard by which everyone can live, manufacture and supply. What we see as a threat is this patchwork quilt of individual and unique state legislations, which will create huge difficulties for commerce and the commercialization of products going across state borders.” Gibson also explained how a patchwork of labeling laws would ultimately impact the flavor industry.

“Potentially, how it affects [a company] is very simple,” he said. “A company might say, ‘I don’t want to have to label all my products, so I want to be able to tell people that there’s no label because I’m GM[O]-free. Well, there are a lot of raw materials that we use that are derived from genetically modified sources. It would severely limit the creative palette that a flavorist, who creates the flavors, [could use] to create something.’”

Catherine Herman, manager of regulatory affairs at Flavor & Fragrance Specialties, further explained that sourcing only non-GMO raw materials is difficult from a supply chain perspective.

“For example,” she said, “ethyl alcohol is used as one of the most popular solvents for flavor materials. We also have flavor materials that contain corn syrup, starches, maltodextrin,

caramel color and soybean oil. Obviously, we want to support the U.S. marketplace, so we buy our ingredients within the United States. [However,] when you are talking about crops that are 90% genetically modified across the United States, to find raw materials that would support making a non-GM[O] claim is going to be a challenge from a supply chain perspective.”

Herman added, “Cornell University just did a study on what GM[O] labeling would do to the cost of food for an average family [of four]. It’s between [about] \$500 and \$1,550 a year in additional costs because, obviously, if our raw materials are more expensive, we’re passing it on to our customers.” Those customers, leading consumer product companies, will have to pass that new cost on to consumers, Herman noted.

Lorna Hopkinson, a senior regulatory manager of flavor product compliance for North America and Latin America at IFF, said more U.S. companies could consider sourcing

ingredients outside the United States if the bill is passed. She added that the poor science behind anti-GMO claims is a key issue.

“The FDA has looked at these cases and there really is no significant difference between when [an ingredient] is grown with a GM[O] strain or a non-GM[O] strain,” said Hopkinson. “[GMO] is just an improved hybrid ... It allows for better agricultural practices. A lot of this [talk] has to do with GM[O] for agricultural practices, which is not really affecting the tangible material you touch or eat. So that’s the other misconception that’s been thrown out there. There’s some science that needs to be put into the equation as well. We really want some practical legislation that’s on the table that we can agree to without scare-mongering.”

Gibson added, “We recognize that in order to do that, Congress is going to need information and education, and that’s one of the reasons that we’re here to stand as that resource. If we can do that in a constructive way and build a bridge, if you will, form the relationship, we’re more than happy to do that and provide that.”



From left: Kevin Renskers (Takasago), Catherine Herman (Flavor & Fragrance Specialties) and Joanne Ferrara (ConAgra Foods) begin their introductions to Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ).



*Flavor industry members from New Jersey and beyond visited Capitol Hill.*

He continued, “Non-GM[O] dextrose is available, but there’s not enough of it to replace everything that you would need. If you mandate the legislation, it’s going to put products and, perhaps, companies out of business because they might not be able to get it [at a preferred] price. So, again, the value of genetic engineering and extending the food supply and creating value is going to be important in the future, as it is now. I don’t think we want to take a step backward from that; certainly in the United States, obviously, the economic impact and the business impact are critical. But when you look at it on a global basis, [the benefit is] being able to feed countries, having drought-resistant crops, having insect-resistant crops.”

Gibson continued: “One of the things that we don’t want this to cascade into, regardless of whether we’re talking about genetic engineering or not is simply the innovation in the food supply. If this is an area that ends up legislatively squashing our ability to innovate the food supply and innovate the food products and the delivery systems that bring that food to the table, then we’re going to have different issues to face far beyond the implications that they have for our industry. This is, in some ways, a very important tip-of-the-iceberg issue, so we want to start off on the right foot. [Discussing] this aspect of science, of understanding, coupled with the leverage that can be gained from federal preemption, is very valuable to the industry going forward on this issue, in particular, and as a precedent on other issues going forward.”

Although the group reiterated that their legislative efforts on behalf of the flavor industry for the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act are in the early stages, Michael Gruber, vice president of federal affairs at the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) said he is optimistic that the industry is making progress in the ongoing biotech and GMO labeling debate.



*P&F magazine joined New Jersey FEMA members during their congressional visits on June 18 in Washington.*

“We’re working with the press people, like Michael Pollan, who have written negative articles about biotech, GMOs ... and we’re starting to see progress on the Hill,” Gruber said during a briefing session with the attendees. “I think the most important message today is that we keep the national standard. A patchwork of state laws is going to be difficult and too disruptive to the supply chain and, again, we need to put this authority back in the FDA’s hands.”

Gruber also encouraged flavor industry members to take a proactive role in meeting with their state representatives.

“Meet at the district offices, invite members of Congress and staff to come out to your facility,” he said. “If you [currently] don’t have relationships with [Congress] members and staff, make those relationships back at home so that they recognize the issue and what it means for your business.”

Drawing from his own experience with lobbying efforts, Gruber said the GMA has used social media, like Twitter and Facebook, as well as more traditional letters to the editor to have their voices heard amid the anti-GMO debate.

He concluded, “We’re never going to be able to compete with the volume that [non-GMO activists] generate when they trigger thousands of calls to offices, or they’ve got activists here in town that go and camp in somebody’s front office and protest the member’s position on this particular issue. So this is going to be a long [effort] for us. The work that we do here on Capitol Hill is important, but the work that you all do in the states [and] in the districts is even more important because it gives members a better understanding of the unintended consequences of the state-by-state proposals ... What we’re doing today, is very, very important.”

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