

# New push in Maine for GMO labels

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — People who want to require that all genetically modified food in Maine be labeled as such cheered a House vote Thursday on a bill that would let Maine voters decide the issue. But two major hurdles stand between the proposal and November's ballot.

The 85-59 vote represents the latest phase of a multi-step legislative process. This was the first time the bill had come up for a vote in House. But the food fight it seems has just begun.

The vote is almost purely party-line, with Democrats supporting the measure and Republicans opposing. That bodes ill for the GMO labeling bill as it moves to the Republican-controlled Senate or if it is vetoed by Gov. Paul LePage, because the two-thirds support needed to override a veto is lacking.

Still, lawmakers are hopeful this will inch Maine forward on the GMO labeling issue.

"Mainers have a right to know what is in the food we feed our families," said Rep. Michelle Dunphy, D-Old Town, the measure's sponsor, in a prepared statement. "I feel it's time to send this issue to the people of the state of Maine and let them decide."

The bill, LD 991, would allow Mainers to decide at the polls whether food sold in the state that includes GMOs should be so labeled.

It also seeks to free Maine from a 2014 law that tied its genetically engineered food labeling initiatives to similar actions in four contiguous states — Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut. Dunphy wants to repeal the trigger and sunset clause, which would make labeling mandatory in Maine as soon as the law goes into effect.

Because New Hampshire has not enacted a GMO labeling mandate, Maine's 2014 bill is in limbo because it would only be enacted if all four of the other states



A protester dressed as a bee plays dead during a rally in favor of GMO labeling in May 2015 in Portland's Monument Square.

have the law on the books. New Hampshire lawmakers recently rejected a GMO labeling mandate there.

New England ice cream guru Jerry Greenfield, co-founder of Vermont-based ice cream manufacturer Ben & Jerry's, supports the measure.

"Just like labels that require disclosure of farm-

raised salmon or orange juice from concentrate, labeling of GE [genetically engineered] food will provide consumers the information they need to make choices for themselves and their families," Greenfield wrote in his testimony to the Maine Legislature's Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee last

year. He also said that Ben & Jerry's changes its labels often and adhering to this law would not be problematic.

In a public hearing last year, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Deputy Director Heather Spalding and Organic Consumers Association Associate Director Katherine

Paul testified in support of GMO labeling.

"For decades, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association has been leading the fight in Maine for good food, good farming and demanding transparency in labeling food made from GMO crops," said Spalding, according to a release.

**"Mainers have a right to know what is in the food we feed our families."**

REP. MICHELLE DUNPHY,  
D-OLD TOWN

Opponents, including Republican lawmakers who spoke against Dunphy's bill during floor debate in the House, say that the 2014 compromise measure should be given more time to work.

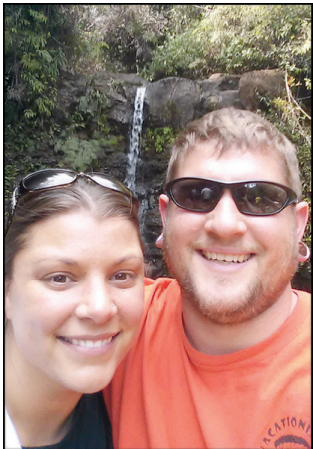
They also argue that requiring GMO labeling would create unfair burdens for business and that it could deprive Maine consumers of some food products currently available to them because national manufacturers might cease shipping to Maine if they have to add special labeling not required elsewhere. The bill goes next to the Senate and faces future votes in both the House and Senate. If it passes both chambers and survives a likely veto, the question will be sent to referendum for Mainers to decide at the polls this fall.

A majority of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee proposed amending the bill to eliminate the referendum component and instead extend the trigger clause, which is set to expire in 2018, to the year 2022.

That would buy Maine four more years to see if New Hampshire enacts a GMO labeling bill. However, Democrats speaking in favor of LD 991 expressed frustration that GMO labeling in Maine is essentially held hostage by New Hampshire and argued that LD 991 is needed now to rectify that situation.

## ALBUM

### Engagement



Katie Hills  
Joshua Freeman

SEARSMONT - Bonnie and Jim Aldus of Searsmont are pleased to announce the engagement of Bonnie's daughter Katie Hills to Joshua Freeman, son of Edward and Natalie Freeman of Knox.

A wedding is planned for Saturday, September 9, 2017.

## Notice

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## Seeds

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Produce from the school's farm in Harpswell bolstered with food from the Seeds of Independence garden will be harvested for the market. Many local farms also contribute. It's locavore heaven.

"We are using the community as a classroom," Henry Gilbert, the school's director of collaborative food systems, said. This spring, crops such as spinach and mixed greens will be planted specifically to meet the needs of the market and cafe.

"This is hands-on work that's giving back to the community," Gilbert said, likening the collaboration to "a microcosm of the food cycle."

Students "will be involved in all aspects of food production," Bradley Goodwin, director of entrepreneurial education at the academy, said.

He held up The School-House Cafe in Harpswell, which is open to the public but also prepares meals for students at the academy, as inspiration.

Seeds of Independence founder Tom Wright is always looking for ways to help disadvantaged youth assimilate into the community. Food "is key," he said, "because nutrition is lacking" with many of the children he serves. Working in the market, watching chef Michael Allen's cooking classes and participating in farm-to-table production could open a window of discovery and a path forward.

"It's a really rare opportunity," said Wright, who owns the building last occupied by Wild Oats Bakery Cafe, where the market resides. "If we get all the players together to have a collective impact on the greatest number of kids who need it the most," the concept could take off across the country.

In the kitchen last week, 16-year-old Clark was all smiles. Learning how a bucket of beets turns into crispy, tasty chips — the house signature — got her thinking healthy. "My last job was McDonald's," she said with a grimace. "The food here is much



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN  
Karli Clark, a student at Harpswell Coastal Academy, works at New Beet Market. Nate Wildes (right) instructs her on how to work with fresh vegetables in the kitchen teaching space.

better." And when she cooks at home she now wonders if chef Allen would approve.

Her schoolmate Christopher Duffek wants to be a chef. "It's a learning experience, not just a job," the 16-year-old said.

And that's the point. "I want to get kids to come to school," D'Anieri said. "If this brings them in, that's a big deal."

If the market is a success, it could have ripple effects beyond the classroom.

"Nonprofits in Maine have a hard time because we are a

high-need state with less access to funding," Pacheco said.

This creative fusion of interests may harvest a bumper crop of benefits. Demonstrating new ways to make a life here is chief among them.

"Maine has a brain drain with kids leaving," Pacheco observed. "They don't come back here to work. We hope we are training kids that want to stay in the Maine economy."

New Beet Market at 25 Burbank Ave., Brunswick, is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.

## Shirley sugar house open Maple Sunday

SHIRLEY — Baker's Maple Syrup, 26 North Road, will celebrate Maine Maple Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, April 2, and Sunday, April 3. The event will offer free tastings, sugar house demonstrations and sap woods tours. The open house is not part of the state's Maine Maple Sunday, March 27, because of the celebration of Easter.

Shirley Community Church will host a brunch featuring Baker's Maple Syrup 11-1 p.m. Saturday, April 2.

For information, call 695-2460 or bakersmaple@gmail.com.

## Blacksmithing at Curran Homestead

ORRINGTON — The Curran Homestead Living History Farm and Museum, 372 Field's Pond Road, will offer a basic six-week introductory

blacksmithing course 6-9 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, beginning Tuesday, March 29. The course is limited to six participants. No experience is needed.

Pat Roy of Belfast will teach the course.

Cost of the course, including materials, book and supplies, is \$385 per participant. Advance registration is required and is on a first-come, first-served by cash, check payable to The Curran Homestead, or credit card (MasterCard or Visa only). To register, contact Irv Marsters, Curran Homestead treasurer, at 745-4426, irv@bangorlettershop.com or by mail at: 99 Washington St., Bangor, ME 04401.

## Baked bean supper at Milford church

MILFORD — A baked bean supper will be held 4:30-6 p.m. Saturday, April 2, Milford Congregational Church, corner of Main and Ferry streets.

The menu will include homemade yellow eye, pea and vegetarian baked beans, brown bread, coleslaw, biscuits and pies.

The cost is \$7 for adults; free for children under 12. Takeouts available. Call 299-7324.

## Kiwanis supper to feature chili

HAMPDEN — The Hampden Kiwanis Club will hold its monthly baked bean supper 4:30-6 p.m. Saturday, April 2, at the Hampden Kiwanis Civic Center.

The meal will feature John's award-winning chili.

Cost is \$7, \$4 for children. Proceeds will benefit Hampden Kiwanis charities.

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**Tickets**  
Tickets will be available at the door and the following locations: BookMarc's (Downtown), Camden National Bank Branches, Huckleberries Card & Gift (Brewer), Machias Savings Bank, Patrick's Hallmark Shop (Broadway), Rebeccas Gift Shop (Downtown), The First Branches

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