

Baby cereal tests indicate high level of GMOs

A study conducted on baby food in South Africa has revealed high levels of genetically modified organisms (GMO).

The GMOs were found in maize tested by an independent and accredited GM testing laboratory in Free State for the African Centre for Biosafety.

Seven formulas and cereals were analysed.

Purity baby cereals contain extremely high levels of GM content, whereas Nestle's infant formulas and cereals indicate that Nestle appeared to be going GM free, said their website.

Aspen's infant formulas also indicate GM avoidance.

Genetically modified seeds are developed in a laboratory by inserting genes from another species into a crop.

African Centre for Biosafety director Mariam Mayet said though they did not know the impact caused by the formulas, they were "worried".

"We tested two Purity, two of Aspen and three Nestle products. None of the baby foods were labelled as containing products derived from genetically modified maize," Mayet said.

Corporate affairs group executive of Tiger Brands Limited, Alex Mathole, insisted that Purity products were totally safe and presented no health risk.

"Purity sources only the highest quality raw materials and products are produced using stringent quality control with good manufacturing practices in place," Mathole said.

She said through the departments of agriculture and health, the government oversees the safety of food and agricultural produce.

Media relations manager of Nestle SA Millicent Molete said: "As a global food manufacturer, we take into consideration local needs and consumer preferences. It is for these reasons that all Nestle infant cereals manufactured in SA are now produced using non-GM maize," she said.

Karyn Purchase, Aspen nutritional chief executive said: "Aspen has always endeavoured to secure non-GM ingredients and commodities, which are used in the manufacture of its high quality infant nutritional products. Use of internationally approved quality raw materials ensure that the formulas remain within all applicable South African legislated GM standards."

The centre's labelling campaign coordinator Zakkiya Ismail said Purity's failure to label food accordingly has deprived parents of crucial information about their baby's nutrition.

She also said comparisons revealed that GM baby cereals cost 250% more than non-GM cereals.

Purity Cream of Maize cereal, which has high GM levels costs R3.19 for 25g, and Purity Baby's First costs R12.99 for 100g. A low GM Nestum Mixed Cereal costs R12.99 for 250g.

"Purity Cream of Maize tested positive as containing 56.25% GM maize and its Baby First tested positive : containing 71.47% GM maize," Ismail said.

Source: Sowetan

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