Dear [NAME]

Thank you for contacting me with your concerns regarding Monsanto’s “drought-tolerant” genetically modified corn. Like you, I believe there are reasons to be apprehensive about consuming genetically modified (GMO) food and I am committed to ensuring our food sources are as healthy and natural as possible.

As an adamant supporter of sustainable organic agriculture practices, a believer in the precautionary principle, and because of the premier agriculture region in our district, it is critical that Congress develop a big-picture approach towards the production of genetically modified foods. A big-picture, or comprehensive, approach means making sure genetically modified foods are clearly labeled and passing legislation that considers our environment, health, diet and nutritional needs. This is undoubtedly a major issue for our Central Coast, and communities across the nation, and I plan to work closely with my Congressional colleagues, lawmakers in California, and local farmers to reach a congenial solution.

As you already know, Monsanto has manufactured a new type of genetically modified corn by inserting a drought-tolerant gene into the corn’s genome; this trait is intended to reduce the limiting effect of drought conditions on the plant’s ability to photosynthesize. The USDA decided to deregulate this new corn, named MON 87460, giving Monsanto the approval to commercialize it. However, I agree with you that this deregulation could potentially cause serious environmental damage and we still do not know the long-term effects of GMO crops on our health or environment. In fact, the existence of unregulated GMO crops could impact the environment by raising the risk of herbicide and pesticide resistance, which could create “super weeds” that wipe out existing wild plants. Furthermore, cross-contamination between GMO and organic crops poses serious risks to organic farmers, which is a major concern for many of our Central Coast organic farmers.

In addition to expressing concerns about the spread of GMO crops, I have been at the forefront of the effort to require GMO foods be labeled accurately – so consumers can make a clear choice between consuming organic or GMO foods. You will be pleased to know that I support the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act (H.R. 3553). If this bill becomes a law, it would require foods that contain genetically engineered material, or that is produced with a genetically engineered material, be labeled accordingly. I am also proud to co-sponsor a bill (H.R. 521) that would prevent the FDA from approving genetically engineered fish. Both of these bills have been referred to the Subcommittee on Health and I will certainly support them if they reach the House floor for a vote.

Throughout my career in public service, I have been committed to ensuring our Central Coast, and communities across the nation, have access to safe, healthy and natural foods. Even as an Assembly Member in the state legislature, I authored the California Organic Foods Enforcement Act of 1989 and I continue to be a champion for fresh, nutritious, and healthy foods. As you can see, I am deeply engaged on the discussions surrounding GMO foods and as Congress continues working on this important issue, I will certainly keep your thoughts in mind. Please feel free to contact me again and I hope to see you along the Central Coast in the future.