n contrast, the USDA regulations allow companies to choose between three options: write out the warning (as in "contains a bioengineered food ingredient"), include a BE label, or use a QR code that would link the consumer to a page disclosing all the information.

Stone, along with other labeling proponents, argue that these options will make it harder for people to actually get the information the legislation is supposed to mandate. “This rule claims to label GMO foods, but it exempts the most common GMO food ingredients like soy oil and corn syrup while allowing the use of QR codes,” he says, “knowing perfectly well that few shoppers have the time or inclination to get out their phone, scan a code, and read a website over and over while shopping.”

Unless those regulations change, though, it could be quite hard to figure out exactly which foods contain GM ingredients and which do not. Many of the top GM crops grown for human consumption—maize, soybeans, canola, sugar beet, papaya, squash, eggplant, potato, and apples—get processed first, and wouldn't require a label. The rest, if sold whole or as part of another food, would necessitate one. A recent overview of attitudes towards GM foods, published in the journal Annual Reviews, commented that "Since soybeans and corn (the most widely planted GE crops) are common ingredients in many food products (corn starch, corn syrup, corn oil, and soybean oil), it is likely that foods in the United States listing soybeans and corn as ingredients contain some GE ingredients unless it is specifically stated that they do not."