

Detecting the Presence of GMOs in Tortilla Chips Served U.S. Major Restaurant Chains

Authors: Kristen Donahue, Kenny Levenson, John Senat, Stephany Sifuentes

Today, consumers are more aware and demand more information about the foods they consume. Transgenic crops, such as BT-corn, are a popular topic of concern among an ever-growing population of health-conscious consumers. Additionally, many U.S. consumers are regularly going out to eat at restaurants instead of cooking at home, with about half of all U.S. food expenditures accounting for food-away-from home. Specifically, chips are becoming a staple of the current American diet and are popular amongst diverse demographics. This study is an attempt to discover if tortilla chips served in common U.S. restaurant chains are genetically modified. Tortilla chips from some of the largest restaurant chains: Moe's, Taco Bell, Chilis, and Chipotle, were screened for the presence of the most common transgenes in corn: *Cry1Ab*, *ESPS4*, as well as the GMO marker gene *nptII*. Additionally, the corn samples were tested for evidence of genetic modification using ELISA. Since detailed information on foods served in restaurants is either unavailable or not easily accessible, the findings of this experiment should provide consumers with valuable information about the presence and/or prevalence of GMOs served in major restaurant chains.