

## Abbott Non-GMO Similac Infant Formula a 'Clear Win' for Consumers and Shareholders

Mark Astley | May 28, 2015

**Abbott Laboratories' decision to launch two non-GMO infant formula products in the US is a "clear win for consumers and for shareholders," says environmental health advocacy group, [As You Sow](#).**

This week, Abbott launched a non-GMO version of its popular Similac Advance infant formula at selected Target stores across the US.



Distribution of Similac Advance Non-GMO will be extended in the fall, and a non-GMO version of its reduced-lactose Similac Sensitive infant formula is scheduled to hit shelves in the US in August.

This follows three years of engagement and Abbott shareholder resolutions from [As You Sow](#).

[As You Sow](#), which promotes corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, tabled unsuccessful anti-GMO proposals at Abbott shareholders meetings in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Speaking with DairyReporter.com, [As You Sow](#) heralded the development of Similac Advance and Similac Sensitive "a clear win for consumers and shareholders."

"It shows that the company is paying attention to the preferences of both groups, and we commend their decision to reformulate with more sustainable ingredients," said Austin Wilson, environmental health program manager, [As You Sow](#).

It has now called on Nestlé USA (Gerber) and Mead Johnson Nutrition (Enfamil) to follow the example set by Abbott.

"As Abbott stated in their release, there is growing market demand for environmentally-friendly and safe products," said Wilson.

"Abbott has demonstrated their leadership - Mead Johnson and Nestlé are now playing catch-up."

### Shareholder proposals

Until now, all Similac infant formula products sold in the US - with the exception of Similac Organic - have been made using genetically-engineered ingredients.

Abbott, Nestlé USA and Mead Johnson Nutrition have been repeatedly petitioned to remove GMOs from their infant formula offerings.

For the last three years, **As You Sow** has tabled anti-GMO proposals at Abbott's annual shareholder meeting.

In 2013, it called on Abbott to remove genetically-engineered ingredients from its Similac products "until long-term safety testing proves GMOs are safe." The proposal received just 3% support from Abbott shareholders.

A year later, **As You Sow** proposed GMOs be labelled on Similac infant formula. It was rejected, receiving just 5.25% of votes cast.

Last month, Abbott shareholders rejected **As You Sow's** latest proposal to produce a report on the company's use of genetically-engineered ingredients in nutritional products.

Speaking with DairyReporter.com earlier this week, Abbott spokesperson, Lindsay Delco, said such pressure played no part in the company's decision to develop non-GMO infant formula products.

"This is more about offering consumers choice," she said.

Undeterred by the failure of previous proposals, **As You Sow** will continue to work with Abbott "on supply chain sustainability and corporate responsibility," said Wilson.

"Our approach is to work with companies and ensure that they are making consistent progress on corporate responsibility issues," he said. "When dialogues are not productive and progress is not evident, shareholder proposals are effective at demonstrating to management the level of concern shared by investors."

### **"Important step forward"**

GMO Inside, a Green America campaign dedicated to the removal of GMOs and toxins from the US food supply, welcomed the development of Similac Advance Non-GMO and Similac Sensitive Non-GMO, calling it "an important step forward for the company and an important advance for infant health."

"Parents deserve better for their children's health and want their children to grow up in a healthier environment as well," GMO Inside said in a statement. "We urge Abbott to make all of its infant formula non-GMO, and on its competitors to do the same."