

Prop 37: 8 Reasons for Voting Yes for Labeling GMO Foods

Post by JOHN LAWRENCE | San Diego Free Press
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The French prime minister announced on September 15, 2012 that France would maintain a ban on Monsanto's MON810 maize, the only genetically modified organism (GMO) currently allowed in Europe. Thanks to activism by French citizens and serious political outcry, Monsanto is now effectively blocked from Europe's gigantic marketplace. This is even more true when you consider that France is the largest agricultural producer in Europe.

But that's not all. Following the ground-breaking French study that graphically linked the lifetime consumption of Monsanto's GMO corn in rats to massive tumors and direct organ failure, Russia's premiere consumers rights organization has suspended both the importation and use of Monsanto's GMO corn within the nation's borders.

Also in March, 2011 the Mexican States of Tlaxcala and Michoacán each passed legislation banning the planting of genetically modified corn to protect natural plants from further GMO contamination. Together, both states produce about a third of all of Mexico's corn. GMO corn can cross-contaminate ancient strains of Mexican maize.

Meanwhile, the "No on 37" ads are proliferating. They are saying that Prop 37 is arbitrary because it doesn't call for labeling alcohol, restaurant food, meat or cheese. However it does

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call for labeling all fruits and vegetables which are GMO products. That's certainly a worthwhile start. Since all animal products in the grocery stores have eaten GMO corn, labeling animal products as GMO because they ate GMO corn when they were alive would result in blanket labeling of all meat products except those who were fed organic grass or corn, a minuscule quantity.

Also labeling GMO foods on restaurant menus would result in every item on the menu being labeled as GMO. This would be a little extreme to start, and would guarantee massive infusions of lobbying cash into the battle for GMO labeling by the other side. Alcoholic drinks contain GMOs, but again it would be impractical at the present time to require a bartender to inform you that the drink you just ordered contained GMOs. It is better just to consume organic products insofar as possible. Organic wine is already labeled as such. There are GMO grapes, but the larger issue is the fact that grapes are heavily sprayed with herbicides and pesticides, and grapes aren't grown from seed making GMO grapes a non-issue.

Bourbon by definition must be made with 51% corn. Nearly every distillery uses GMO corn to make bourbon. However, at present there are two organic, non-GMO choices: Four Roses and Wild Turkey. However, even those whiskies are not committed to using non-GMO corn since there is little of it available these days. Jack Daniels is ending its commitment to using non-GMO corn. In 2000, a number of their consumers, particularly those in Europe, expressed a preference for non-GM ingredients, and they opted for only 100% non-genetically modified corn. But now they are going to GMO corn because of availability issues. I guess they will lose the European market. Here is a marketing opportunity for someone!

It is not only concern about GMO corn that calls for caution.

Colin O'Neil, regulatory policy analyst at the Center for Food Safety, says he hasn't seen any science pointing to genetic material passing through the distillation process. But, as he sees it, that's not the only cause for concern.

"To assume that the only real risk is contamination of genetic material ignores the fact that these crops by and large either produce an insecticide (which has been shown not to break down in the human gut) or they are engineered to withstand exposure to herbicide." And farmers are spraying an increasing amount of Roundup and other weed killers as a result of herbicide-resistant "superweeds," he points out.

"I don't know what types of pesticide residues are on the corn that goes through the distillation

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process," O'Neil adds, "but residue in any form presents an increased exposure to consumers."

So bourbon aficionados will have to take their chances or demand organic whiskey because Prop 37 will not protect them. Beer drinkers should import European beers now that GMO maize, which had been previously used in beer manufacturing, has been banned there.

Major U.S. companies have dropped genetically engineered foods in Europe, citing consumer fears. There is a survey which says that Kellogg, Coke, Pepsi, Kraft, Heinz, and others comprise a growing list of companies going GMO-free – but not in the U.S. Some of these companies are behind the "No on Prop 37" campaign here in California. If enough people in the US demand GMO free foods and beverages as they have in Europe, they will have to provide them here as well.

Here are 8 reasons you want Prop 37 to pass, and why you ought to support it:

1. GMOs have never been proven safe. The FDA conducts no independent testing of GMOs, but instead claims that they are "not substantially different" from non-GMO foods.

2. The biotech industry is not required to conduct long-term safety studies on GMOs, and it keeps researchers from conducting those tests by claiming the right to protect its patented seeds and technologies.

3. GMOs are everywhere. Today, most non-organic US corn, soy, cotton, and sugar beets – which are used in most of the sweeteners and additives used by food processors – are genetically engineered. So is the feed fed to the animals you eat. In fact, 75-85% of the processed food in your grocery store contains unlabeled GMOs.

4. The companies who want you to believe GMOs are safe are the same ones who lied to you about Agent Orange and DDT.

5. GMO crops are responsible for super weeds and super bugs, soil degradation, and a lack of

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diversity – which makes crops and humans more susceptible to disease.

6. The only folks who don't want you to know what's in your food are huge corporations like Monsanto, Dow AgriScience, BASF and food conglomerates like Pepsi and Coca-Cola – who along with other biotech, pesticide and processed food manufacturers have donated nearly \$33 million to defeat Prop 37.

7. This is our best – and perhaps only – shot at labeling GMOs and ending Monsanto's monopoly of our food supply and destruction of our health and environment. Nineteen other states have tried – and failed – to get a GMO labeling law through the state legislative process. Prop 37 takes GMO labeling direct to the voters so Monsanto's lobbyists can't kill it.

8. If this law passes in California, food manufacturers have admitted that it may as well be a national law. They won't want to put "this product contains GMOs" on their labels, so they will reformulate their products. And if they reformulate for California, they may as well do it for all of their products.

Early voting on Prop 37 begins on October 9. By November 6, this historic initiative will have passed or failed.

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