

A Right to Know

Ever walk by those people at your local grocery store asking for you to sign a petition? Most likely those people have been trying to get you to sign a petition to have Genetically Modified Foods labeled. On April 20th all the signatures will go to the state capital. If 10% of California voters sign the petition it will be on the ballot for Fall 2012 elections.

The US is the single largest producer of genetically modified crops. In 1999, 72% of all genetically modified crops grown worldwide were grown in the US.

On February 8th, 2012 US Senator Barbara Boxer and US Congressman Peter DeFazio wrote a letter titled "Joint Bicameral Letter Asking FDA to Label Genetically Engineered Foods." In the letter they wrote "the FDA should protect consumer rights and prevent consumer deception by requiring the labeling of Genetic Engineered foods. By giving American consumers information fundamental to their choices in the marketplace, we protect and promote the integrity and health of our economy".

A member of the initiative for Butte County Louisa Garza has spent many hours doing radio interviews and collecting signatures to increase awareness about the importance of the initiative. "This initiative ties in with "the slow food, local food, and being aware of the new food revolution," said Garza.

Garza is in favor of the initiative because 55 other 1st world nations have accepted this policy of labeling GMO foods "if the large companies are so proud of the science behind GMO why not label so the consumers have a choice," said Garza.

Garza is concerned for the implications of GMO crops for small and large farmers. "Farmers who choose to grow GMO cannot save their seeds so they have to purchase new seeds every year," said Garza.

Lundberg Farms a local Butte County farm has decided to label Non-GMO



GMO crops are patented and when the pollen from these plants spread to nearby private farms it can contaminate other plants. If companies find GMO plant DNA on private farms they can sue and potentially bankrupt the private farm."

The initiative will also have a big impact on grocery stores. At Chico Natural Foods (CNF), GMO is a major concern for many of the shoppers and the employees at CNF including a grocery buyer named Topher Dalton. "Customers will request to completely void the store of all GMO products," said Dalton.

If the initiative does pass, food companies will be mandated to have signage on GMO products. Dalton predicts how food companies will manage. "They will probably not change the entire package, but would have point of purchase signage sent to all groceries stores to put next to product on the shelf, not on the actual package," said Dalton.

So what will this mean for grocery stores? "The mandate will require companies like CNF to put up signage or a fine will be charged. Changing packaging for companies that supply to the whole USA would be very difficult to have the package changed just for California," said Dalton.



Topher hopes that California will be the leading role model to have all food in the country labeled so the consumer has the right to decide.

Believe it or not we are all consumers. Luke Adams, a Chico State college graduate, has been doing research about GMO foods. "A group of consumers want to know what they are buying and supporting and it is sad that this initiative came from the grassroots movement and not from the government looking out for the consumer," said Adams.

Adams is concerned for the consumer. "In a free economy I do not think a consumer should be constrained by a forced ignorance. The movement is proof that consumers want to know what they are buying. Big agriculture does not want it to pass, because they are not confident in their own product and concerned for those who eat it," said Adams.



You still have until Friday April 20th to sign the petition. Some places in Chico where you can sign are Trader Joes, Chico Natural Foods, Safeway and S&S produce. By signing the petition you are not saying that GMO's are wrong, but that we should have the right to know what is in our food.

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