

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Stand Up For GMO Labeling

Coming very soon, Californians will have a unique and precious opportunity to stand up for our basic right to know when our foods contain experimental and hazardous GMOs (aka Genetically Modified Organisms). But we need to act now for that to succeed.

GMOs have been shown to harm our health, environment, crop productivity, farmer independence, and community seed-saving. But we're all probably currently eating these hidden "novel" foods without even knowing it (unless we eat 100% organic). How many health problems in the U.S. today are being caused by GMOs, but we can't identify the link because there's no labeling?

The good news is that, because of committed activists and the nearly million folks who signed petitions, Proposition 37 is poised to let us be informed when GMOs are in our food, so we can choose if we want to eat them or not.

But standing between us and that simple outcome is expected to be a gauntlet of well-funded GMO manufacturer propaganda. They will surely claim to be serving our best interests, while hiding their true goal of continuing to profit from their poorly-tested, pesticide-using, seed-stealing "proprietary agricultural products."

To overcome this propaganda, I think we need to do what I call voter "inoculation" – giving voters key facts about the proposition before the propaganda onslaught. Then folks are less likely to get hooked by untruths or talked out of their rights. We can use people power to fend off the corporate invaders! I hope this column helps encourages that process, and thus the success of Prop. 37.

Key things to know

1) California's Prop. 37 simply requires that GMO foods at retail stores be labeled, so we can choose

if we want to consume them. It also prohibits calling GMO products "natural." (It doesn't require labels for restaurant food, alcoholic beverages, or medical products.)

The Yes on 37 campaign says, "The right to know is a fundamental right and a bedrock American value. In a democratic, free-market society, consumers get to make informed choices about what we eat and feed our families."

Most other industrialized nations already require GMO food labeling. The list of over 40 countries includes many in Europe plus Australia, Japan, Russia, and China. Some regions also have cultivation bans. We're the odd ones out!

The real question is: If GMO makers think their products are so safe, then why not let us know that they're there?

2) This is just about labeling GMOs, not whether GMOs are good or bad. Many of us think that much better controls are needed before GMOs are released. But we don't have to get too entangled in those specifics here. Labeling just gives everyone the choice to act on their own beliefs. Since 90% of Americans say they don't want to be exposed, labeling should be the *minimum* that we do.

3) The cost of implementing this is ridiculously trivial. Manufacturers regularly update their labels, and would have time to phase in these changes. See www.anh-usa.org/pro-gmo-propaganda-in-california-dismantled-by-new-cost-study.

4) There's persuasive evidence of the health, ecological, and financial harm of GMOs. We can be brief on this, but there are serious and valid reasons to act. For specifics, see www.earthopensource.org/index.php/reports/58 and www.huffingtonpost.com/michelesimon/top-10-lies-told-by-monsa_b_1819731.html.

The bottom line is that we don't need to allow tinkering with the genetic keys of life — especially by corporations that consistently put their profit above truth, fair process, and our shared well-being. The real solutions are *not* GMOs but sustainable agriculture, fair food distribution, and community empowerment.

Your next actions

1) Learn more and support the groups taking on these Goliaths. Go to www.carighttoknow.org and www.labelgmos.org. See who's endorsed this, add your own name, "Like" their Facebook pages, and maybe even donate time or money.

2) Encourage others to vote for Prop. 37 now, before the propaganda intensifies. You can share this article; it's also at www.patriciadines.info/EcoGirl6c.html.

3) Connect with allies and learn more at the National Heirloom Exposition, Sept. 11–13 in Santa Rosa. This "pure food" event offers top speakers on GMOs and heirloom foods, plus booths and exhibits. www.theheirloomexpo.com

4) Support larger-scale GMO action. Great resources are the Center for Food Safety www.centerforfoodsafety.org and Dr. Vandana Shiva www.navdanya.org.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of [The Organic Guides](#), and Editor and Lead Writer for [The Next STEP](#) newsletter. Email your questions about going green to EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info for possible inclusion in future columns. Also see "Ask EcoGirl" on Facebook! And contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical.

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