

## **Ojai Valley Green Coalition Proposition 37 Editorial Part 1**

Disclosure is a good thing for a consumer. It gives you the information necessary to make, well, an informed decision. Like those little stickers that say "Made in America," GE food labeling would let you know that an ingredient or food has genes that were altered in a laboratory. Proposition 37 on the November ballot is all about full disclosure. A label will let you know more about that bread on the peanut butter sandwich you included in your child's school lunch, that tomato in your salad on the family dinner table, or the popcorn you eat while watching a game on television. Is it a GE product or does it contain one? Right now we don't know.

What is a GMO or GE food you might ask? A GMO (genetically modified organism) is a plant or animal product that has had its DNA artificially altered at the molecular level in a laboratory, usually with genes from other plants, animals, viruses, or bacteria. This type of genetic alteration is not found in nature and cannot occur naturally. Genetic engineering (GE) is that laboratory process, which is distinctly different than natural breeding. The companies who introduced GMOs into our environment heralded their products as the easiest way to increase U.S. profits and feed the quickly growing world population. Unfortunately, due to the rush to "modernize" our food supply and the carrot of corporate profits, disclosure and the consumer's right to know was left in the dust.

Many consumers wrongly believe that the FDA is an independent 'watch-dog,' requiring the necessary research to determine if products in general, or GMOs in particular, are safe to consume and safe to let loose in our environment. Unfortunately that is most certainly not the case for GMOs. As it stands there is no regulation and the flood gates are wide open. GMO corn alone has already entered the food market in a huge way as the ubiquitous corn syrup has infiltrated the processed food sector.

According to the FDA Statement of Policy - Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties, "It is the responsibility of the producer of a new food to evaluate the safety of the food and assure that the safety requirement of section 402(a)(1) of the act is met."

In other words the FDA is leaving the regulation up to the corporations who are reaping the profits from selling the products. According to The Institute for Responsible Technology, a company can introduce a GE food to the market without even notifying the FDA, our federal agency that regulates national food safety. The FDA does not require any safety evaluations or labeling of GMOs.

In fact in March of this year, 55 Members of Congress sent a letter to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asking the agency to require the labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods and several states have begun to consider their own bills to require GMO labeling, or prohibit them entirely.

That is why you are urged to support Proposition 37. It will allow consumers to vote with their pocket book. With GMO labeling requirements, consumers can make their

own decision about what they put on their family table. Consumers who don't want to take the risk can avoid purchasing GMO evolved products.

In part 2 we'll explain why there are those who would spend money to oppose the labeling movement.