

# Measure 27

Requires labeling of genetically-engineered foods (as defined) sold or distributed in or from Oregon

## GE labeling proposal falls short of lofty goals

★THE CLACKAMAS PRINT★



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**Luke Mahan**  
Photo Editor

How would you feel if you were a vegetarian and you found out the tomato you just ate contained DNA from certain kinds of fish? Or that the milk you're drinking contains a hormone linked to breast and prostate cancer? Now suppose you are informed that that same hormone was created by a company who manufactured Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. Sadly these situations are too real to just imagine, and too

serious to ignore. This is the reason Measure 27 was drafted; to label genetically engineered foods so that consumers will know what they could be buying, and have the choice to reject these altered foods.

The arguments I have heard and read seem to orbit two chief issues: One being the fact that these foods have not been proven to be poisonous, toxic, or health or environmentally damaging in any way. The second being the cost involved in labeling.

Concerning the first argument, that is just the problem: Genetically-engineered foods have not been proven to be damaging; but neither have they been proven to be harmless. There is no way we can tell now what affect these foods may have on health and the environment in the future, and labeling such foods will give consumers the option not to take the risk. It's been said probably millions of times, but the message of the old cliché still holds true: "Better safe than sorry!" We could pay dearly for rushing into the use of these altered foods without further study.

As for cost, it seems as though anti-labeling advocates say it will cost too much. Millions of dollars even, in taxes, over time. Pro-labeling advocates say there will be no cost, citing many other countries with labeling laws as examples. So who is right? It's hard to say. However, I can say that whatever costs are involved in labeling altered foods, I would be happy to pay, for they are surely less than the potential damage that indiscriminate use of genetically-engineered foods can cause.

Here is where my opinion takes an unexpected turn: I am not advocating a yes vote on Measure 27. It is widely admitted, even among pro-labelers, that the measure is poorly written. Holes are left unfilled which allow some foods to go unchecked. Additionally, the status of federal legislation is currently being decided, specifically The Genetically Engineered Food Right To Know Act of 2002. This would make an Oregon law unnecessary.

I fully support the labeling of genetically engineered food, as I believe all citizens have the right to know what is in their food. But I do not think it should be achieved by avenue of Measure 27.



**Robb Egan**  
Staff Writer

Deep down, I really wanted to like Measure 27. It's not hard to see how the labeling of genetically engineered products would be important to some people, most especially those unable to consume certain foods due to medical restrictions, religious convictions or rampant bouts of vegetarianism. Really, I'm a big believer in knowing precisely what it is I'm about to ingest. I simply think there has got to be a better way of finding out.

Oh sure, Measure 27 sounds incredibly reasonable and promising at first. No doubt it was created with only the best of intentions. However, it doesn't take long to recognize it is poorly written and potentially harmful. I'm now convinced it must have been written by a not especially gifted type-writing monkey. One who was suffering from some kind of brain damage. Maybe a concussion. With widespread unemployment and a struggling economy, Measure 27's costly labeling regulations could not come at a worse time.

In a letter to Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, Deputy Commissioner of the FDA Dr. Lester Crawford stated that in the FDA's scientific judgment there is no significant difference between genetically engineered food and non-engineered foods, that their evaluation of genetically engineered foods show them to be as safe as their more natural equivalents, and "Moreover, mandatory labeling to disclose that a product was produced through genetic engineering does not promote the public health in that it fails to provide material facts concerning the safety or nutritional aspects of food and may be misleading to customers."

That's our nation's highest authority on food talking. Measure 27 has managed to attract quite an impressive list of detractors here at home as well, including Oregon farmers, the Associated Oregon Industries (AOI), school officials (did I mention that Measure 27 would be wasting a substantial amount of money that might otherwise be available for school funding?), Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman E. Borlaug, and Robert Buchanan, former director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Economic Development Department, among many others.

And of course we must not forget the all-important bottom line. The cost. Oh, where to start. How about \$17 million in the first year alone. Around \$120 million over the next ten years. Tens of millions of dollars in lost sales and increased overhead costs for Oregon farmers and restaurants, meaning fewer jobs and increased cost for the consumer. A recent study estimated that Measure 27's labeling scheme would cost an average family of four an additional \$550 a year. Ouch. And that's just food costs. Don't get me started on tax repercussions. It's scary.

So if you'd like to pay hundreds, perhaps thousands more a year on food bills and taxes just so the ODA can slap some moronic sticker on your box of Twinkies, then by all means vote yes on Measure 27. If not, you're always more than welcome to join me in voting NO.

## How do you feel about Measure 17?

Amends constitution: reduces minimum age requirement to serve as state legislator from 21 years to 18 years

See story page 4



**Bradley Bushnell**  
18

"The sooner people that age get into politics the better chance they have later in life."

"You have to have more experience in life. You have to know what's going on. You haven't even finished your education at that age."

**Karie Harbin**  
19



**Mark Falling**  
18

"When you're 18 you don't have enough knowledge or experience."

"We're not mature enough. We don't have enough life experience."

**Jeremy Marcum**  
19



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You can drop your ballots off at the ASG office in CC 140 until 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 5.

For more information call ext. 2247