



League of Women Voters Oregon General-Election Ballot Measures 2014

Measure 92--Mandatory Labeling for Genetically Modified Foods (Initiative)

The measure would change state laws to require the Oregon Department of Agriculture and/or Health Authority to prescribe, enact, and enforce rules to ensure that food suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers label all raw and packaged food that is entirely or partially produced with genetic engineering effective January 2016. The measure would not include the labeling of alcohol; food served in restaurants; milk, meat, and other food products made from animals fed genetically engineered feed. An action for violations of the law could be brought by the State or by any injured citizen acting in the public interest.

<i>EASY READ GUIDE</i> Information

Official Title:

[Changes State law] Requires food manufacturers, retailers to label "genetically engineered" foods as such; state, citizens may enforce.

The way it is now:

Seed companies can change, or modify, the genes of seeds for growing food. The modified genes in the plants can keep insects (bugs) away, or stay alive when sprayed by weed killer. These kinds of modified seeds and plants are called "Genetically Modified Organisms," or GMOs. In the U.S. corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, sugar beets, alfalfa, papayas and squash are often GMOs. There are no laws in Oregon that say food grown from GMOs need a label. But laws say foods labeled "organic" cannot have any GMOs.

What Measure 92 would do:

Labels will be required on raw and packaged foods that have GMOs, by January 2016. It will apply to retailers, suppliers, and manufacturers.

How much would it cost:

It will cost the state \$550,000 to \$600,000 to start the program. It will cost more to carry out the law.

Argument for:

People have the right to know if the food they buy has GMOs. Labels will tell people if food has GMOs.

Argument against:

No one has proved that food with GMOs has bad health effects. Measure 92 will increase food costs. It will hurt family farms and small businesses.



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State of Oregon Measure 92: Mandatory Labeling for
Genetically Engineered Food

VOTERS' GUIDE INFORMATION

State of Oregon Measure 92: Mandatory Labeling of GMOs

Official Title: Requires food manufacturers, retailers to label "genetically engineered" foods as such; State, citizens may enforce

Initiative: This measure would create a statutory provision placed on the ballot by initiative petition with an estimated 118,780 valid signatures.

Financial Impact: The measure would result in expenditures for start-up costs estimated at between \$550,000 and \$600,000. Depending on the assumptions used, costs for enforcement are variable; therefore, the total financial impact is indeterminate.

Probable Results of a YES Vote: If this measure passes, labels would be required on raw and packaged foods that are produced entirely or partially by genetic engineering, commonly called Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), effective January 2016 and would apply to suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers.

Probable Results of a NO Vote: If this measure fails, existing law, which does not require labeling genetically engineered, or GMO foods, would be retained.

Background:

Genetically engineered (GE) plants are food crops that have had one or more genes inserted into or removed from an organism resulting in a modification. Originally, GE focused on insect resistance and herbicide tolerance. It now also addresses modifications in nutritional value, taste, and growing conditions, among others.

Since the 1990s, use of genetic engineering has been growing, and currently the following GMO crops have been introduced: corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, sugar beets, alfalfa, papayas and squash. Currently, the United States is the largest producer of GMO crops.

At issue for Measure 92 is whether GMOs should be labeled. Sixty-four nations – including all members of the European Union, India, Japan, China, Brazil, and Russia – have adopted labeling laws in some form for genetically engineered food. In the U.S., GMO labeling is presently voluntary. The U.S. government does not have labeling requirements for GMOs. Developers of GMO products must submit data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for foods developed for human consumption or animal feed. The FDA evaluates the data; if they are satisfied with the developers' safety assessments and have no further questions about safety or other regulatory issues, the products can enter the market.

GMOs cannot be present in food that is labeled organic. Efforts to require labeling of foods containing GMOs have been growing at the federal, state, and local levels. Some states have recently passed



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legislation requiring labeling of GMOs, including Connecticut, Maine, and Vermont. Similar measures have been defeated in California and Washington.

The Proposal: The measure requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture and/or Health Authority to prescribe, enact, and enforce rules to ensure that food suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers label all raw and packaged food that is entirely or partially produced with genetic engineering effective January 2016. The measure would not include the labeling of alcohol; food served in restaurants; milk, meat, and other food products made from animals fed genetically engineered feed. An action for violations of the law could be brought by the State or by any injured citizen acting in the public interest.

Supporters say:

- U.S. food manufacturers already label GMO food they distribute to 64 countries. Oregon consumers have the right to know whether the foods they select are genetically engineered so they can make informed purchasing decisions.
- Labeling GMO foods would allow for greater transparency and consumer protection.
- There is mounting evidence that the use of GMO crops has contributed to the growth of herbicide-resistant “superweeds” and increased the use of herbicides.
- Consumers Union, the policy arm of Consumer Reports, has determined that GMO labeling won't increase food costs and has endorsed Measure 92.

Opponents say:

- Measure 92 won't give consumers reliable information about which foods contain GMOs and which don't. Some foods would be labeled "genetically engineered" even if they're not. For example, packaged food containing sugar derived from GE sugar beets or oil from GE soybeans have zero GE content, yet must be labeled "genetically engineered." Some products would have to be labeled to avoid liability if producers couldn't provide documentation for all ingredient sources.
- Measure 92 won't tell consumers which ingredients in a product are GMOs, how much of the product is GMO, or the purpose of the genetic modification.
- Existing nationwide labeling systems already give consumers a more reliable way to choose foods made without GMOs by choosing "organic" or "non-GMO" labels.
- Measure 92 would increase food costs for Oregonians, hurt family farmers and small businesses, and increase costs to taxpayers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Genetic engineering is a process that includes the creation of GMOs. Genetic engineering is the broader process; GMOs are a specific set of outcomes.

Contacts:

Proponents: Oregon Right to Know
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Opponents: No on 92 Coalition
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Persons contacted:

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Pat McCormick, No on 92 Coalition
Kay Erickson, State Budget Policy Manager, DAS Financial Office

Other sources:

- City Club Report on Measure 92, July 2014
- Citizens Initiative Review on Measure 92, August 2014
- ABA Health Section, Health eSource – FDA and Regulation of GMOs
- Pew Charitable Trust Stateline – Many States Weigh GMO Labels
- Secretary of State – Financial Impact Statement <http://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/Fiscal-Impact-web.pdf>
- Ballotpedia - [http://ballotpedia.org/Oregon_Mandatory_Labeling_of_GMOs_Initiative,_Measure_92_\(2014\)](http://ballotpedia.org/Oregon_Mandatory_Labeling_of_GMOs_Initiative,_Measure_92_(2014))
- LWVUS Agriculture Update, GMO section, 2013.

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