

CITIZENS' INITIATIVE REVIEW: REVIEW OF COLORADO PROPOSITION 105

Requires food that has been genetically modified or treated with genetically modified material to be labeled.

OVERVIEW

This Citizens' Statement was developed by an independent panel of 20 Colorado voters, chosen at random from the voting population of Colorado, and balanced to fairly reflect the state's voting population. The panel has issued this statement after 3.5 days of hearings and deliberation.

FINDINGS

- Sixty-four countries around the world require GMO labeling, and 16 of the top 25 countries that import Colorado food products require GMO labeling. Many US food manufacturers already label their foods that contain GMOs for export to these countries.
- Labels required by Proposition 105 would not tell consumers which ingredients in a packaged food product are GMOs, or what percentage of the product is GMO ingredients.
- Existing food labels already give consumers a reliable way to choose foods without GE ingredients, such as "organic" and "non-GMO" labels.
- Approximately 2/3 of the foods and beverages we buy and consume would be exempt. Meat and dairy products would be exempt even if they come from animals raised on GMO feed and grain. All alcoholic beverages, food for immediate consumption served in restaurants and other institutions would also be exempt, even if they contain GMO ingredients.
- Proposition 105 is not a ban or a warning on GMOs. The proposition proposes labeling only.
- Genetic modification takes certain genes from one species and puts them into a different species. This is different from hybridization, which is a cross between two naturally compatible varieties within the same species.
- Proposition 105 would not give consumers reliable information about which foods contain GMOs and which don't. Many foods would require labels even if they don't contain GMOs. Others would be exempt even if they contain or are made with GMOs.
- Prop 105 will require imported/out of state products to comply with Colorado GMO labeling requirements.
- Documenting and labeling foods as GM will require oversight, compliance, record keeping, and handling, and therefore may increase costs for farmers, food producers and consumers.
- No long-term epidemiological studies in humans have been carried out to determine whether there are any health effects associated with GM food consumption.

These findings were agreed to by a supermajority of the panel.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

11 of 20 panelists took this position:

- Under Proposition 105, labeling genetically engineered foods would provide basic information to let Coloradans make more informed buying decisions, offering more choice and control over the transparency of their food purchasing decisions.
- State law allows one issue to be addressed per amendment title. Alcohol, foods for immediate consumption and foods derived entirely from animals are exempt since they are regulated under different statutes.
- Sixty-four countries around the world require GMO labeling, and 16 of the top 25 countries that import Colorado food products require GMO labeling. Many US food manufacturers already label their foods that contain GMOs for export to these countries.
- Once the rules are in place, staffing, computer software maintenance, and food sampling and testing are estimated to cost \$130,000 annually.
- Proposition 105 is not a ban or a warning on GMOs. The proposition proposes labeling only.

ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

9 of 20 panelists took this position:

- Labels required by Proposition 105 would NOT tell consumers which ingredients in a packaged food product are GMOs, or what percentage of the product is GMO ingredients.
- Proposition 105 would impact Colorado farmers and food producers, potentially increasing costs and putting our farmers and businesses at a competitive disadvantage. Businesses would have added costs for record-keeping, verification and handling systems, and may require segregation of crops
- Proposition 105 would not give consumers reliable information about which foods contain GMOs and which don't. Many foods would require labels even if they don't contain GMOs. Others would be exempt even if they contain or are made with GMOs.
- Mandatory single-state labeling systems may impose higher costs on farmers and businesses producing and selling products in the state. These costs may be passed on to consumers, possibly resulting in higher food prices.
- Food products would have to be labeled as "genetically engineered" – even if they're not. Other food products would be exempt from being labeled – even when they do contain or are produced with GMOs.