

Citizens' Review Statement

This Citizens' Statement, authorized by the 2011 State Legislature, was developed by an independent panel of 20 Oregon voters overseen by the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review Commission. The panelists were randomly selected from registered voters in Oregon and balanced to fairly reflect the state's voting population based on location of residence, party registration, age, gender, education, ethnicity, and likelihood of voting. Over a period of three and a half days the panel heard from initiative proponents, opponents, and background witnesses. The panelists deliberated about the measure and produced this statement. This statement has not been edited, altered, or approved by the Secretary of State.

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the members of a citizen panel and were developed through the citizens' review process. They are NOT official opinions or positions endorsed by the State of Oregon or any government agency. A citizen panel is not a judge of the constitutionality or legality of any ballot measure, and any statements about such matters are not binding on a court of law.

Key Findings

- Labeling genetically engineered foods would provide information to let Oregonians make more informed buying decisions and this would offer them more control and transparency over their food purchasing decisions.
- The labeling requirements do not apply to alcoholic beverages, or prepared restaurant food because they are currently outside the food labeling system laws.
- Regardless of M92, consumers seeking GMO-free food can purchase items labeled non-GMO or organic.
- 64 countries, including most of Europe, Australia and Japan, already require labeling of genetically engineered foods and when those countries switched to requiring labeling food prices did not go up.
- The costs of actual labeling are a tiny fraction of the costs of compliance and certification. The bulk of private costs arise in segregation of products along the supply chain.
- Under M92, if passed, meat and dairy products from animals that have been raised and fed with genetically engineered feed and grain will not be labeled GE.
- Labels required by Measure 92 would NOT tell consumers which ingredients in a packaged food product are GMOs, or what percentage of the product is GMO ingredients.
- If we are going to sell GMO salmon that contain genes from an eel-like organism (something the FDA may soon approve), or other engineered fish or meat now in development, we should label them.
- Importantly, these costs will be borne by firms and consumers for both GM and non-GM foods as labeling foods as non-GM will require oversight costs.
- U.S. food producers already label their GMO foods in 64 countries.

Citizen Statement in Support of the Measure

Position taken by 9 of 20 panelists

- M92 would offer Oregonians more control and transparency over our food purchasing decisions and does not act as a warning or ban.
- Labeling genetically engineered crops could benefit Oregon family farmers that grow traditional crops by increasing public demand for crops that are not genetically engineered.
- U.S. food producers already label their GMO food in 64 countries, including Australia, Japan, and most of Europe.
- There is mounting scientific evidence that the widespread use of genetically engineered crops designed to survive large amounts of herbicide spraying is leading to a large increase in the use of these chemicals.
- A national consumer organization and a regional medical organization have stated that there are still questions about the long-term health effects of genetically engineered crops.

Citizen Statement in Opposition to the Measure

Position taken by 11 of 20 panelists

- Under M92, if passed, meat and dairy products from animals that have been raised and fed with genetically engineered feed and grain will not be labeled GM.
- The costs of actual labeling are a tiny fraction of the costs of compliance and certification.
- Labels required by Measure 92 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 more reliable way to choose foods without GE ingredients if that is what they prefer, including "organic" and "non-GMO" labels. Measure 92 conflicts with these national labeling standards.
- Thousands of food products would have to be labeled as "genetically engineered" – even if they're not. Thousands of other food products would be exempt from being labeled – even when they do contain or are produced with GMOs.