



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 7, 2012

California GMO-Labeling Ballot Measure Fails

Voters in California voted [against](#) Proposition 37, the initiative that would have mandated genetically engineered foods be labeled, on Tuesday. The final results on the ballot measure were 53.1 percent opposed to the measure and 46.9 percent in favor.

California was the first state to allow voters, instead of lawmakers, to decide whether labels like “This product contains GMOs” will appear on food packages. Advocates of labels in California managed to garner one million signatures on a petition to get Proposition 37, also known as the California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act, on the November ballot.

While the California Right to Know campaign was fought on behalf of Proposition 37, major biotech companies such as Monsanto fought to counter it through the “No on 37” campaign, on which over \$45 million was spent.

As noted by Rodale News, genetically modified ingredients are “derived from lab-created plants that have been genetically modified to resist (and sometimes even create their own) toxic pesticides, withstand drought, or produce higher yields.”

A recent [study](#) conducted by Gilles-Eric Seralini of the University of Caen in France provoked concerns about the use of GMOs with a study in which a Monsanto seed variety known as NK603, made tolerant to the company’s Roundup herbicide, was fed to rats. The rats fed the GM corn developed tumors and experienced kidney and liver damage. Natural Society [explains](#): “As a result of the mass tumors, liver and kidney damage, it was concluded that around 50 percent of the males and 70 percent of the females died prematurely as a result of eating only Roundup tolerant seed or drinking water with Roundup [at] approved levels set by the United States government.” Rats that drank trace amounts of Roundup at levels that are legally permitted in the water supply had a 200-percent to 300-percent increase in large tumors over rats drinking uncontaminated water.

Natural News [notes](#), “This is the same corn that’s in your corn-based breakfast cereal, corn tortillas and corn snack chips.”

The study may potentially lead to the widespread suspension of use of genetically modified corn throughout Europe. But in the United States, a measure to simply label the GMOs could not pass.

According to opponents of Proposition 37, the measure would have unfairly stigmatized foods that they claim are perfectly safe for consumption. “We said from the beginning that the more voters learned about Prop. 37, the less they would like it,” said [Kathy Fairbanks](#), a spokeswoman for the opposition. “We didn’t think they would like the lawsuits, more bureaucracy, higher costs, loopholes and exemptions. It looks like they don’t.” “California voters clearly saw through Proposition 37 and rejected higher food costs, more lawsuits and more bureaucracy,” said Henry I. Miller, a spokesman for the “No





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on 37” campaign, on its television spots.

But those who supported the measure assert that there is more to the measure’s failure than simply a rejection by consumers of more regulation. They have [accused](#) Proposition 37 opponents of misleading the public in their ads by improperly invoking the Food and Drug Administration. The quote in question is as follows: “The US Food and Drug Administration says a labeling policy like Prop 37 would be ‘inherently misleading.’”

According to the California Right to Know campaign, the FDA never made such an observation. Natural News reports, “The FDA never actually issued such a statement, of course, as the law prohibits the agency from taking an official position on the matter. But for its own malicious purposes, the No on 37 campaign decided to affix both the quote and the FDA seal on its campaign propaganda in an attempt to sway public opinion against the measure.”

Deliberate falsification of quotes and logs for the purposes of campaigns is in violation of Section 506 of the U.S. Criminal Code, and as such, California’s Right to Know campaign has reported No on 37’s criminal act to the Department of Justice.

Additionally, the “No on 37” campaign has been accused of fabricating front groups and impersonating a police organization to send out fake mailers to voters, claiming that that the police were also opposed to GMO labeling, a claim that Natural News contends is “entirely false.”

The majority of the opposition to Proposition 37 has been funded by big chemical, and biotech, and food processing companies, most notably Monsanto. Curiously, many companies that sell organic foods were opposed to the measure, but these organic brand-name companies are generally owned by large food processing companies that would stand to lose if Proposition 37 was passed, since, by definition, organic foods would be prohibited from containing GMOs. The “No on 37” coalition raised over \$45 million dollars to defeat the law.

According to [data collected](#) by cornucopia.org, the largest donors to the “No on 37” campaign were Monsanto, at over \$8 million, and DuPont, at over \$4 million, since the ballot initiative was first approved in May. Others include Pepsico, Nestle, Coca-Cola, Kellogg’s, General Mills, J.M. Smucker, Ocean Spray, and Hormel Foods. Companies that purport to be “natural” but sided with the “No on 37” campaign include Kashi, Silk, Cascadian Farm, and Larabar.

Supporters of Proposition 37 included [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#), Nature’s Path, Amy’s, Dr. Bronner, Organic Valley, Lundberg Farms, and Eden Organics.

Regardless of the loss, advocates of GMO labeling were proud of their efforts to raise public awareness on the use of GMOs in regularly consumed products. “Proposition 37 placed the issue of GE [genetically engineered] food labeling front and center and took critical steps forward in heightening the discussion and raising the profile to make labeling and transparency around our food a reality for the nation,” said Gary Hirshberg, chairman of Just Label It. Similarly, as Natural News [noted](#), “The campaign organized over 10,000 volunteers in California alone and succeeded in achieving a massive social media presence.”

The fact that the “Yes on 37” campaign forced giant biotech companies to spend over \$45 million is also a significant feat, as that is “a record expenditure by the world’s largest toxic pesticide companies to try to prevent consumers from knowing what they’re buying,” adds Natural News.

Still, the results out of California came as a surprise for many. According to Rodale News, more than 75



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percent of processed foods include genetically modified organisms, even as surveys show that 90 percent of Americans wish to see genetically modified foods labeled.

Photo of billboard in favor of Proposition 37: AP Images



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