

Farmers speak out for GE labeling

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Speaking at farmers' markets

Wednesday in honor of international Food Week, California farmers — conventional and organic alike — declared their support for labeling genetically engineered food.

Challenging a series of [misleading advertisements](#) that claim otherwise, this new coalition, Farmers for Truth in Labeling, is making it explicitly clear that they support [Proposition 37](#) and the honest conversations with consumers it will create.

John Coelho, a grape and pistachio grower with a few thousand acres outside of Fresno, responded directly to the misleading ads:

For too long, opponents of Proposition 37 have been putting words in our mouths. Farmers for Truth in Labeling have come together across the state to say, in our own voice, that we believe in transparency and that labeling genetically engineered food will only help us understand and deliver what consumers want.

To date, more than 2,000 California farms have officially endorsed Proposition 37 and labeling GE food. Coelho and other Central Valley farmers have collectively spent \$6,500 to purchase two billboards so that local residents could learn more about the issue.

Ads produced and paid for by the “No on 37” campaign — including over \$20 million from out-of-state pesticide corporations who stand to lose significant market share if the measure passes — have been airing regularly on television for the past three weeks. Those corporations claim that the measure will put the state’s farmers at a disadvantage.

But Farmers for Truth in Labeling, including Joaquin Contente, disagree. He runs a dairy and 500-acre farm near Hanford, and explained his perspective clearly:

The notion that labeling will hurt farmers is just ridiculous. Farmers are smart, hard-working people — we will figure out how to deliver what the market wants. Proposition 37 is straightforward and flexible, and it allows us as farmers to get clear signals from consumers.

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Those out-of-state corporations bankrolling opposition to Prop 37 are not expected to back down. Monsanto, along with five other companies, BASF, Bayer, Dow, DuPont and Syngenta — collectively known as the “[Big 6](#)” — dominate the world’s seed and pesticide markets and top the list of “No on 37” donors. To date, opponents to the GE labeling measure have contributed more than \$35 million, including [\\$20 million from the “Big 6”](#) alone. As Election Day draws closer, more contributions are expected.

Speaking at a farmers market in Sacramento on Wednesday morning, Marga den Hoed of Common Kettle Farm expressed her frustration:

Pesticide corporations are trying to sell us a bill of goods. Genetically engineered crops make farming more expensive, and keep farmers tethered to the pesticide treadmill. We have to fight to keep the food system working for farmers and consumers.

As recent studies and U.S. Department of Agriculture data show, genetically engineered crops — namely corn, cotton and soy — have [driven up the use of pesticides](#) over the past 15 years. In turn, this has led to the development of “superweeds” and greater weed resistance, spurring on use of increasingly hazardous pesticides that can harm the health of farmers, farmworkers and their families.

Farmers for Truth in Labeling are committed to engaging consumers in open, honest conversations about how their food is produced. And they're not alone in supporting GE labeling. Over [60 countries](#) around the world have laws similar to Prop 37 in place, and polls show that more than 90% of Americans are in favor labeling GE food here in the U.S.

Passing Prop 37 will be an important step in the right direction.

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