

**9th International Conference on
Agricultural Biotechnology: Ten Years After**

organized by the:

**International Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology
Research (ICABR)**

and the:

**Catholic University of Leuven
CEIS - University of Rome "Tor Vergata"
Centre of Sustainable Resource Development, University of California at Berkeley
Economic Growth Centre, Yale University**

Ravello (Italy), July 6-10, 2005

**“A Proposition in California to Ban Growing Genetically Engineered
Crops Has the Opposite Effect”**

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ABSTRACT

A proposition was introduced in San Luis Obispo County, California in 2004 to ban growing genetically engineered crops in the county. Media in the area covered the proposed ban. In addition, there were direct mailings sent to residents of the area, forums were held to discuss the ban, and signs were posted at the homes of residents opposing and supporting the ban. Residents of the county voted against the ban in November 2004. The ban was defeated at the polls in November 2004.

This research shows that the proportion of residents of the county that were willing to purchase a genetically modified food product increased after the proposition was introduced. The proposed ban generated media coverage of genetic engineering in agriculture. Past research has shown that the more familiar consumers are with genetically modified food, the more likely they are to purchase such food products. This research shows that familiarity with genetically modified food increased after the ban was introduced. Thus, the proposed ban increased media coverage and familiarity with genetically modified food. The increased familiarity is related to the increase in acceptance of genetically modified food.

In order to examine a possible change in consumer attitudes toward purchasing a genetically modified food product in the San Luis Obispo County, a simulated before and

after experimental design was used to eliminate the impact of pre-measurement error. The data collected before the introduction of the proposition to ban growing genetically engineered crops, Measure Q, uses a survey instrument that was administered through the use of a personal interview during the fall of 2002 and winter of 2003 in San Luis Obispo County, California with a sample size of 544. The data collected after the proposition for the ban was administered through the use of a personal interview during November of 2004 in San Luis Obispo County, California with a sample size of 216. The post-measure interviews used the same survey instrument that was employed the previous year. In addition, questions concerning how respondents became familiar with the measure, how they voted on the measure, and their political party affiliation were added to the survey instrument.

This research shows that those that voted against the ban were more likely to purchase genetically modified food and be registered to vote as a member of the Republican party. Further, this research examines the general attitudes and behaviors concerning food purchasing between those that voted for and against the ban. In addition, this research examines the general attitudes and behaviors concerning food purchasing between Republicans and Democrats. It appears that general attitudes toward food and political party affiliation are related in San Luis Obispo California.