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Date: 10/20/14
Submitted in APHA-R Committee
Council File No: 13-1374
Item No.: 3
~~Topic~~: Communication from
the public

October 16, 2014

Mayor Eric Garcetti
City Council President Herb Wesson
Chairman Felipe Fuentes
Chairman Jose Huizar
Chairman Mitch O'Farrell

Re: Endorsement of LA GMO Free Zone Motion - File #13-1374

Dear Mayor, President Wesson, Chairman Fuentes, Chairman Huizar, Chairman O'Farrell, and
Honorable Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter and our 40,000 members in the Los Angeles area, I
am writing to express our organization's endorsement of the Koretz-O'Farrell motion #13-1374
to make the City of Los Angeles a GMO-Free Zone with regard to the sale, distribution and
growth of GMO plants and seeds.

The Sierra Club strongly supports urban gardening and agriculture as activities that help us
engage in and fulfill our organization's mission to "explore, enjoy, and protect the planet."

Urban gardening and agriculture help green and beautify our city, provide educational and
recreational opportunities for our citizens, and enable people to take an active role in producing
healthy food to eat. Urban gardens also provide much-needed plant communities of flowering

plants and trees upon which critical pollinator species depend. Pollinator species like bees and monarch butterflies are under tremendous stress worldwide, and clean, organic urban agriculture can play a crucial role in saving these threatened species.

Urban gardening and agriculture, especially when carried out organically, also helps our environment by allowing people to grow food without the use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Organic gardens and the plants grown in them provide an important source of healthy food, and the trimmings and scraps left over also provide a rich source of material that can be used to make soil-nourishing organic compost.

All of these positive aspects of urban gardening, and especially of organic gardening, are seriously threatened by the ever-increasing threat and presence of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

The Sierra Club has grave concerns about the development and use of GMOs and their impact on the environment. We recognize that a lack of long-term studies of GMOs means that we do not have adequate information or proof that GMOs are safe for the environment or for the health of consumers. We are also aware of many studies that have suggested that GMOs are, in fact, harmful to the environment and the health of consumers.

We are also very concerned with the cross contamination that can occur when GMO seeds and plants are grown; organic gardeners take great care to plant seeds and grow plants whose quality and safety they can trust, and contamination by GMOs through seed drift and cross-pollination makes it virtually impossible to guarantee the healthfulness and organic quality of the plants they harvest after so much careful and dedicated tending of their crops. Moreover, GMO manufacturers' patent controls can lead to problems with local agriculture efforts, including organic home and community gardening, cultivation of heritage crops, and seed saving. Organic gardeners should be able to grow from organic and saved seeds, and this becomes increasingly difficult when seeds are either contaminated or subject to patent controls.

GMOs are also known --indeed are specifically made-- to make it easier to use pesticides, something the Sierra Club strongly opposes.

Studies suggest that GMOs are responsible for adverse impacts to already imperiled bee and butterfly populations. Bees and butterflies are indispensable pollinators crucial to the future of agriculture and food production, not only on distant farms, but here in our city, where home and community gardeners and small-scale, local agricultural operations, especially those that

are striving to be organic and to grow plants without the use of chemical fertilizers, are heavily dependent on the natural cycle of pollination that bees and butterflies provide.

Due to its serious concerns with all of the above-mentioned issues, the Sierra Club has adopted a policy that calls for a moratorium on the use of GMOs, and we strongly support a ban on the sale, growing, and distribution of genetically-modified seeds and plants in the City of Los Angeles.

Indeed, we congratulate you on taking this bold step that will help protect the health of our city residents, the health and very existence of our bees and butterflies, and the burgeoning growth of organic gardening and sustainable agriculture in our beautiful city.

We urge you to make every effort to support and pass this measure. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Hillary Gordon

Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Conservation Chair

WHAT IS GMO-FREE LA?

If passed, GMO-Free LA would prevent the sale, distribution, and growth of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), specifically GMO seeds and plants in Los Angeles City. For more information, contact gmo-free-la@gmail.com.

School gardeners, community gardeners, and local seed savers concerned about GMO contamination of their organic and heirloom crops first conceived of GMO-Free LA. Their activism resulted in Councilmembers Koretz and O'Farrell sponsoring GMO-Free LA. GMO-Free LA is seconded by Councilmember Bonin.

WHY SHOULD YOU VOTE 'YES' ON GMO-FREE LA?

Los Angeles City residents, business owners, local gardeners, and other stakeholders demand it.

- GMO-Free LA has collected over 2700 signatures in favor from around the City.
 - GMO-Free LA has collected over 50 letters of endorsement from restaurants, food producers, farms, health coalitions, religious groups and others.
 - GMO-Free LA is the sister motion to the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone motion introduced on Oct. 8, 2014. Both motions advocate for land use that promotes easy access to fresh, local, clean foods for Los Angeles City residents.
 - Having a GMO-Free Zone in Los Angeles will protect the quality of the food increasing numbers of people are growing in their homes, schools, and communities.
 - Cities are not targeted for sale of GMO seeds and crops, thus banning sale of GMO seeds and crops would likely not impact the cost of seeds.
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EXISTING GMO-FREE ZONES

- City of Arcata, CA
- City of Point Arena, CA
- Mendocino County, CA
- Trinity County, CA
- Marin County, CA
- San Juan County, WA
- Jackson County, OR
- 14 municipalities in British Columbia, Canada
- Most of Europe, Australia, Japan, and several other nations

NOTE: *GMOs are the splicing of genes between different species that would never cross breed in nature. GMOs require high-tech laboratory gene-manipulation. GMOs have only been planted and consumed en masse since the 1990s. Prior to their invention in laboratories, there were no GMOs growing anywhere in the world. Now they are in most US foods.*

ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN OTHER GMO-FREE ZONES

Cities and counties that have legislated GMO-Free Zones have used some of the following strategies to enforce the ban on GMOs:

- Allowing folks that currently have GMOs growing on their property a six-month time frame within which to transition away from growing GMO crops.
- Only banning GMO seeds and plants, not non-organic seeds and plants (hybridization does not require the same laboratory process of crossing genes between species that were evolved to never cross in nature).
- Complaint-based enforcement: asking neighbors and community members who realize a neighbor is growing GMO crops to inform the city that the GMO ban is being violated.
- Designating GMO growth to be a 'public nuisance,' due to the damage caused to the community by releasing GMO crops into the public through backyard plantings
- Fining violators, possibly under misdemeanor classification, and using fines to fund enforcement measures.
- Contracting with the County Agricultural Commissioner (which already does inspection of local farms) to do inspection, field-testing, and enforcement.

RUNNING LIST OF ENDORSEMENTS

- Biosafety Alliance (Festival de Maiz)
- Cafe Gratitude Larchmont (local business)
- California State Grange
- Center for Food Safety
- Citizens for GMO Labeling
- Cityscape Seeds (local business)
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Community Health Councils
- CRSP Institute for Urban Ecovillages
- Dr Jeanette Ryan, Integrative and Functional Medicine
- Environmental Change-Makers
- Erewhon Natural Foods (local business)
- Follow Your Heart (local business)
- Food and Water Watch
- Food Farm Freedom Coalition
- Friends of the Earth
- GMO Free USA
- GMO Inside
- Good Eggs (local business network)
- Green America
- Haas & Company (local business)
- Holy Nativity Episcopal Church
- Hugo's Restaurants (local business)
- Humble Bee Bakery & Restaurant (local business)
- Institute for Responsible Technology
- Label GMOs
- Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council
- Larchmont Juicery / Twirl (local business)
- Latino Diabetes Association
- Live Yoga Wellness (local business)
- LL Designs and Boutique (local business)
- Mar Vista Community Council
- Moms Across America
- MoveOn Los Angeles
- Nary Dairy (local business)
- Nature's Path
- Northeast Valley Green Alliance
- Nutiva
- Olive It (local business)
- Organic Consumers Association
- Peg Cummings Design (local business)
- Pesticide Action Network
- Poppy's Natural Cleaning Products (local business)
- Progressive Democrats of the Santa Monica Mountains
- Real Creative Space (local business)
- Seed Library of Los Angeles
- Sifted LA (local business)
- Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter
- Slow Food California
- Soundsations (local business)
- St. Jeromes Catholic Church
- Tesouro Boutique (local business)
- The River Project
- Uncle Berch's Foods (local business)
- Vinh Loi Tofu Restaurant

For more information, contact:

gmofreela@gmail.com

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