



Support Local Food Rights

Establishing Food and Farm Rights for Lane County

www.localfoodrights.com

FAQ's on the Lane County Campaign to Adopt a Local Food System Ordinance

Date: July 20, 2013

OVERVIEW

Support Local Food Rights has prepared this FAQ sheet to:

- help explain the recent Lane County Clerk's decision regarding the Local Food System Ordinance.
- provide background on the reasons for bringing such a law forward.
- outline our next steps in claiming our right to decide how food is grown and distributed in Lane County through this ordinance.

The recent review of the ordinance petition submitted by Support Local Food Rights is part of a process that every initiative goes through—namely, to review ordinances to determine if they meet the test of addressing a single issue. In the County Clerk's opinion, our ordinance did not meet single-subject requirement.

Support Local Food Rights disagrees with that determination and we will appeal it to the Lane County Circuit Court. The FAQ's below will clarify the issue and process.

DOES THIS MEAN A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM ORDINANCE IS ILLEGAL?

NO. The County Clerk's decision was not about the legality of the ordinance, but solely about whether it addresses more than one issue. The clerk felt that there were a few sections that did not meet the single subject test. However, this doesn't mean that it doesn't meet legal requirements, nor does it stop a similar initiative from being filed in another county. Support Local Food Rights, drafters of the ordinance, is appealing the decision.

WHAT IS SINGLE SUBJECT?

All initiatives in Oregon – local and state – go through a single subject review before being authorized for signature gathering. The “single subject” rule in Oregon requires that all provisions of a citizens' legislative initiative be connected and germane to a single goal. The initiative that was reviewed by the County Clerk had provisions not only guaranteeing rights to a local food system, but also prohibiting corporations from interfering with those rights. Support Local Food Rights advanced the ordinance in this way because we are aware of the overwhelming role of corporate power within the local food system - that it is, in fact, impossible to protect a local food system if corporate agribusinesses can override those rights by claiming that their so called “rights” and privileges are superior.

WHY A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM ORDINANCE?

Corporations have painstakingly constructed a system of laws – through the use of public institutions including the courts, state legislatures and Congress – to prevent us from stopping threats such as GMO's, and to chill community efforts when our activism threatens their established “rights.” Corporations have essentially created

a “box of allowable activism” that, by design, limits the role citizens can play in protecting their own communities. We have generally gone along with these superimposed limitations, settling for “what can we get” rather than asking “what structural change do we need?” to guarantee that GMO’s never see the light of day.

The problem isn’t simply GMO’s, but a system of law that enables corporations to impose GMO’s upon our communities without our consent. If we are to stop GMO’s from contaminating our local food system, we need to change the legal system itself.

The Local Food System Ordinance takes aim at the existing legal system by redefining corporate “rights”, invalidating less protective preemptive state and federal actions and elevating the right of the community above competing rights claimed by agribusiness corporations. It is about “reframing” the dispute – from being focused on the question of whether GMO’s are harmful to being about the authority and “rights” of agribusiness corporations to override the authority and rights of communities to self-govern.

WHAT IS A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM ORDINANCE?

A local food system ordinance seeks to protect residents’ right to local farm and food systems, seed heritage and natural systems of soil and water. It seeks to do so by prohibiting unsustainable corporate practices – like GMO’s and seed patents – from violating those rights.

NEXT STEPS IN LANE COUNTY

Support Local Food Rights is appealing the County Clerk’s recent decision. It is unclear yet how long it will take for a judge to hear the case, though the group expects a decision within one to two months. The campaign effort continues and folks are invited to help build the necessary infrastructure to qualify the Local Food System Ordinance for the May 2014 ballot.

Join this effort by emailing us at connect@localfoodrights.com or calling 541 255-0272.