

Nearly a year and a half ago Humboldt County residents began a series of open, public meetings at the Bayside Grange in order to discuss local concerns about GMOs and to chart a course of action. People came from all parts of the county, from all walks of life and expressed a variety of perspectives on the issue. The discussions that took place were wide-ranging and passionate.

The folks who attended were farmers and business owners, academics and medical professionals, stay-at-home moms, non-profit advocates, backyard gardeners, and many others. They raised a multitude of intelligent, informed and nuanced concerns about GMOs, concerns that ran the gamut from economic to environmental, from ethical to medical.

This group was not of a single mind. In fact, tensions sometimes ran high, and voices were raised more than once. But in the end, we came out of those meetings with an understanding of core goals we all shared, which were later summed up in three words: fairness, prosperity and protection. We also came out of the meetings knowing that, together, we had the opportunity to take meaningful action to move our county toward those goals.

As an all-volunteer, grassroots effort, I'm very proud of our efforts to bring this issue to the voters. I truly believe that this is what democracy looks like. Will Measure P solve all of Humboldt County's problems? No. It won't even address all of everyone's concerns about GMOs but, from my perspective, it is a step in the right direction.

Measure P is an opportunity for Humboldt County voters to support the development of our local sustainable food system – Buy Local, as Brian Papstein would say. It's an opportunity to give our county's agricultural economy a boost, and to

safeguard the right of our farmers to save their own seeds. Measure P is neither pro nor anti GMO. It simply provides a way to ensure that Humboldt's farmers can take advantage of a growing niche market and it protects us from the ever-increasing amounts of toxic chemicals required by genetically engineered crops as insecticide and herbicide tolerance increases. There are millions of acres planted in GMOs; what is wrong with having a three-county, contiguous economic zone with Mendocino and Trinity Counties where they are not planted?

At its heart, Measure P is about a shared vision for Humboldt County, which emphasizes local control over corporate control, where sustainable agriculture is a way of life that brings broad prosperity to the local economy, and where local citizens control the future of local food. It's a vision of a place where the natural resources on which we depend are treated with respect. Let's support our agricultural base and continue to market ourselves as the good food capital of California.

Whether or not you share that vision make sure you vote. Democracy depends on it.