

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS  
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD - AG COMM BOARD AGENDA # B-4  
Urgent  Routine  AGENDA DATE August 9, 2005  
CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES  NO  4/5 Vote Required YES  NO   
(Information Attached)

SUBJECT:

Approval to Adopt a Resolution in Support of the Use of Biotechnology in the Agricultural Industry in Stanislaus County - Agricultural Advisory Board

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Accept the Informational Presentation by the Stanislaus County Agricultural Advisory Board on the Subject of the Use of Biotechnology in the Agricultural Industry in Stanislaus County.
2. Approve a Resolution in Support of the Use of Biotechnology in the Agricultural Industry in Stanislaus County.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this item.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2005-611

On motion of Supervisor DeMartini, Seconded by Supervisor Mayfield  
and approved by the following vote,  
Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Mayfield, Simon, DeMartini, and Chairman Grover  
Noes: Supervisors: None  
Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None  
Abstaining: Supervisor: None

- 1) X Approved as recommended
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Denied
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ Approved as amended
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

MOTION:

ATTEST: Christine Ferraro  
CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

# APPROVAL TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE USE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN STANISLAUS COUNTY

Page 2

## **DISCUSSION:**

Agriculture is the leading industry in Stanislaus County. Stanislaus County agriculture is diverse, producing over 250 different crops. In 2004, the gross agricultural production was over \$1.9 billion dollars. Associated industries involved in the processing of agricultural commodities result in a "multiplier effect" so that agriculture's contribution to the local economy for the year 2004 amounted to almost \$9 billion dollars.

Because of the importance of agriculture to the local economy and the community way of life in Stanislaus County, it is crucial that local growers are able to utilize a wide range of technologies available in order to produce a safe, healthy and affordable food supply. The use of biotechnology in agriculture has many benefits including: crop varieties which have been developed to ward off pests, resist particular herbicides, resist plant diseases, tolerate adverse growing conditions, as well as improving production and reducing costs.

Biotechnology in agriculture is sometimes referred to as genetic modification or genetic engineering of crops. In crop production, some major goals of genetic modification are to: reduce the need for chemical pesticides and herbicides, reduce water use, increase nutritional quality, increase food safety, improve plant quality for storage, and increase yields. Genetic modification has been in existence for thousands of years, when people first began crossbreeding plants to produce better foods and fiber. Modern genetic modification began in 1953 when scientists discovered the structure of DNA. Since then, researchers have learned how to move genetic material from one plant to another. For most crops, the seed is the delivery system through which advances in plant genetics and biotechnology are transferred into agricultural production. Genetically modified seeds can better protect crops against diseases, pests and weeds, and can generate improved products.

Biotechnology has been the subject of voter initiatives in Butte, Humboldt, Marin, and San Luis Obispo Counties in the most recent general election. The initiatives were intended to prohibit the use of biotechnology, including genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and were placed on ballots by those opposed to the use of such technologies. The initiatives failed in all but Marin County. Mendocino and Trinity Counties banned the growing of genetically engineered crops on March 2, 2004 and August 3, 2004, respectively. Currently, the counties of Sonoma, Alameda, Lake, Santa Cruz, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Placer and Santa Barbara have activities contemplated or underway to prohibit or limit the use of biotechnology.

In order to protect agriculture and to affirm the rights of growers to choose to utilize the widest range of technologies available, several San Joaquin Valley counties have adopted resolutions to protect this right. The counties of Kern, Tulare, Merced and Fresno have all passed resolutions within the last year protecting the use of biotechnology in agriculture. It has been recognized that biotechnology can help to improve the San Joaquin Valley's air and water quality through the control of both particulate matter and ozone forming emissions through reduction of cultivated activities, and the control of sediment, nutrient and pesticide runoff into waterways through the reduction of pesticide use and tillage in the fields.

**APPROVAL TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE USE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN STANISLAUS COUNTY**  
Page 3

Regulatory oversight for regulating biotechnology in the United States is the responsibility of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration. New crops must meet the proper regulatory requirements before they are approved to be grown on a commercial basis and introduced in the market.

The Stanislaus County Agricultural Advisory Board recognizes that agriculture is the prime industry in Stanislaus County and plays a significant role in our economy and way of life. The Agricultural Advisory Board affirms the rights of growers to be allowed the choice of the same promising technology that is currently used by agriculturalists around the world. Therefore, the Stanislaus County Agricultural Advisory Board requests that the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution in support of the use of biotechnology in the agricultural industry in Stanislaus County.

**POLICY ISSUE:**

The adoption of a resolution in support of the use of biotechnology in the agricultural industry in Stanislaus County is consistent with the Board Priority to maintain a Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage.

**STAFFING IMPACT:**

There are no staffing impacts associated with this item.

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Date: August 9, 2005

No. 2005-611

On motion of Supervisor DeMartini Seconded by Supervisor Mayfield  
and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Mayfield, Simon, DeMartini, and Chairman Grover

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED:

Item # B-4

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE USE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY  
IN STANISLAUS COUNTY**

WHEREAS, the Stanislaus County Agricultural Advisory Board is an Advisory Board to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, and

WHEREAS, the Stanislaus County Agricultural Advisory Board is comprised of agricultural leaders throughout the County and the Agricultural Advisory Board recognizes that agriculture is the number one industry in Stanislaus County, and the Agricultural Advisory Board affirms the right of farmers and ranchers to utilize the widest range of technologies available to produce a safe, healthy, abundant and affordable food supply, and that the safe, federally regulated use of biotechnology is a promising component of progressive and viable agricultural production, and

WHEREAS, the use of biotechnology in agriculture has enhanced the well-being and environmental stewardship of communities through reduced pesticide use and exposure to other environmental factors, and

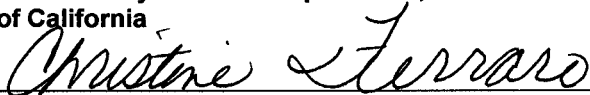
WHEREAS, improvement of the San Joaquin Valley's air quality is essential and mandated by law, agricultural biotechnology can assist in the control of both particulate matter and ozone forming emissions through the use of cultivated activities, and

WHEREAS, the San Joaquin Valley's water quality is vital, agricultural biotechnology can assist in the control of sediment, nutrient and pesticide runoff into waterways through the reduction of pesticide use and tillage in the fields, and

WHEREAS, less inputs, higher crop yields, and healthier plants have and will continue to greatly enhance the vitality and viability of our agricultural economy by production choices to the farmer, and

WHEREAS, the federal government has been regulating the production and introduction of biotechnology-enhanced crops for almost two decades and those new crops go through an extensive multi-year testing process before the new crop is approved to be grown on a commercial basis, and

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk  
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors,  
State of California



WHEREAS, the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Department of Agriculture all must research, review and consent to the introduction of new biotechnology crops into the market, making these crops the most highly regulated and scrutinized foods in the world, and

WHEREAS, the ability to use biotechnology in agriculture is a key factor by which farmers and ranchers can stay competitive in the global marketplace, and

WHEREAS, the environmental benefits of biotechnology are important to the long-term sustainability and enhancement of our agricultural community, and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Advisory Board approved a motion at their August 1, 2005 meeting, to support a Resolution to be presented to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors for their consideration to support the use of biotechnology in the agricultural industry in Stanislaus County, thus allowing farmers and ranchers the choice of the same promising technology currently used by agriculturalists around the world.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors supports the use of biotechnology in the agricultural industry in Stanislaus County as a valuable and important tool for progressive and viable agricultural production.