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As We See It: Genetically modified crops banned — why?

Here's the latest Santa Cruz solution in search of a problem:

The county Board of Supervisors voted to place a moratorium on genetically modified crops.

The board did so unanimously — even though no one is growing genetically modified crops locally.

Time will tell whether this ordinance really means anything, because the status of the so-called GMO crops is unknown at this point. Whether the GMOs should be regulated or not is unclear — although if they do require regulation, it should come from a higher level of government than in the county.

Three other counties have passed bans: Mendocino, Trinity and Marin. But more than a dozen others have not, according to the Web site, "Truth about Trade and Technology." In fact, while voters have turned down similar ordinances in some counties, some, mostly in the Central Valley, have actually passed measures supporting genetic engineering.

The issue of genetically modified crops is one that has not been discussed enough — or studied enough. Some say, in fact, that these crops should not be summarily dismissed simply because the name sounds scary.

Truth About Trades and Technology quoted a spokesman for the California Healthy Foods Coalition as saying: "... voters in many counties oppose biotech crops bans. Family farmers should not be denied access to a science that improves the quality of life for their consumers."

At least the local ban isn't permanent. In fact, the ban could be eliminated once warning labels are placed on the food.

But we're skeptical that this ban is necessary on something that isn't even being done. We'd much prefer seeing more science on this and more study. It also seems to us that the appropriate level of government for a matter like this is at the state.

It makes little sense for a ban to apply to just one county when a farm just over the Pajaro River wouldn't have to pay attention.