Box 1 Agbiotech dodges GM labeling bullet in California

US election night saw the defeat of California's Proposition 37, a statewide referendum that sought in-state labels for foods containing genetically modified (GM) ingredients, following an aggressive negative publicity campaign by the agrochemical industry. The result is likely to slow——but not halt—those seeking nationally required labeling for GM foods. The proposition was defeated by a 6% margin. "We dodged a bullet," Conko says; "I would not have predicted this outcome six months ago." But Conko and others do not think that the labeling issue is settled. "This should be the first step of a broader effort," he says. "If the biotech industry doesn't use this to build on and promote public acceptance of the technology, it will have squandered an opportunity." Adds Karen Batra of BIO, "We anticipate we'll continue debating the labeling issue because we have done so for more than a decade now, but we stand by the FDA's policy to label foods in a way that is informative to consumers."   *JLF*

Photodisc

IN their words

"Many labs can now generate the data but fewer people or labs have the expertise and infrastructure to analyze it—this is becoming the bottleneck." Gad Getz, head of the Cancer Genome Analysis group, Broad Institute in Boston, speaking of the data deluge from total genome sequencing of tumors. (*Reuters*, 1 November 2012)

"These animals were the culmination of 10 years of work, and it will take time to replace them." Gordon Fishell, associate director of the NYU Neuroscience Institute, speaking of the loss of experimental animals following superstorm Sandy. (*The New York Times*, 31 October 2012)

Around the world in a month

NORWAY
The Norwegian Research Council invests $7 million in a consortium to sequence the Atlantic cod and salmon. The Aqua Genome Project, aimed at making discoveries about these two commercially important species, includes the Centre for Integrative Genetics at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, the Food Research Institute and the selective breeding company AquaGen.

ISRAEL
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem's tech transfer arm, Yissum Research and Development, forms investment subsidiary, Integra Holdings, to identify and invest in new opportunities based on research at the university.

CHINA
Cigarette maker Philip Morris signs a deal with Canadian company Medicago for rights to develop, manufacture and sell flu vaccines in China. Medicago uses tobacco leaves to make vaccines.

CANADA
A Canadian consortium launches a $41.2-million epigenetics research initiative to study how environmental factors can affect gene expression and lead to disease. The Canadian Epigenetics, Environment and Health Research Consortium will engage the Canadian Institute of Health Research, Genome Quebec and Genome BC, the government of Japan and the Fonds de Recherche Santé, Quebec.

JAPAN
Photographic film business Fujifilm and Kyowa Kirin Biologics form a joint venture to develop a biosimilar version of Roche blockbuster cancer antibody therapy Avastin.

NIGERIA
UNESCO and Nigeria agree to set up an international biotech institute at the University of Nigeria targeting food security and tropical diseases control. The center will provide training, education and research in biotech.

SINGAPORE
Swiss pharma Novartis plans to build a $500-million cell culture plant. The biotech manufacturing facility will be co-located with the pharma production site at Tuas.