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To whom it concerns,

The majority of Australians, and global citizens don't want to eat genetically modified (GM) foods, and this has been shown through actually asking consumers what they think. This is why it is absolutely necessary that All GM foods are independently assessed, and continue to be independently monitored for their health and environmental hazards and risks. They must be labelled as GM, and be traceable. This will allow choice so that farmers, food producers, retailers, and shoppers are able to avoid them, if they choose to follow independent science, or their own conscience.

Currently there are no long-term safety studies that satisfactorily demonstrate that these foods are unequivocally safe to consume. In fact research by independent scientists has indicated that we have cause for concern about the impact of consuming GMfoods, and this means food regulatory bodies, in particular FSANZ, need to err on the side of caution rather than consider the matter settled.

I therefore strongly oppose changes to the Food Code that would allow a wide range of GM foods, made using novel methods that have a very short history of use, and no clear determination of long-term safety, to be sold without safety assessment or labelling. This includes meat and milk from some genetically modified animals and substances like vanilla and stevia produced by genetically modified microbes in factory vats. Any relaxing of the Food Code on this matter would undermine FSANZ's key responsibilities to ensure food safety and our right to know what is in our food. FSANZ goes to great length, above and beyond what is permissible in other countries, to ensure our 'gluten-free' food is very stringently tested. It should be applying this same stringency to all foods, not accepting the 'say so' of corporations who have vested interest in creating their own safety data and studies to 'prove' their products are safe.

FSANZ must apply stringency to all food regulations, in particular novel applications which no truly scientific researcher could claim have been fully tested with all unexpected consequences known in the short period of time in which these technologies have been available. When it comes to food, safety is paramount, otherwise what is the point of FSANZ?

Agrochemical companies cannot be trusted to self-assess the safety of GM foods as they have an appalling record of manipulating data to promote dangerous products. In the last few years we have witnessed multiple cases where Bayer, now owner of one of the major GMO companies Monsanto, has had to pay billions of dollars in compensation for cancer caused by glyphosate products - which had been declared safe and were regulated on the basis of science provided by the company. In a court of law this data the company provided was proven to not only be faulty, but knowingly doctored for the company's benefit. There is no indication that these companies have done anything to combat their own mendacity and duplicity. Therefore, how can FSANZ reliably trust them to supply truthful and independent data about the safety profile of their novel technologies?

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It is a derogation of FSANZ duty to so casually accept the data produced by corporations that stand to gain billions from their technologies. And to then use this data to foist foodstuffs of unknown harm onto the consumers of Australia, and New Zealand.

Even in the short period that they have been used, gene editing techniques have been found to make genetic changes that could never occur in nature and to result in widespread genetic damage that often goes undetected by GM developers. What do we know of the long term effects?

I am deeply concerned that FSANZ has relied on advice from scientists with serious conflicts of interest, to conclude these new GM foods pose no greater risks than existing foods. Those seeking to commercialise GM plants, animals and microbes should play no role in deciding how - or even whether - foods derived from them should be regulated.

The proposed changes would make Australia one of very few countries in the world to allow genetically modified animal products into our food chain with no regulation or labelling. This would put us at odds with our international trading partners, which FSANZ admits "may have a significant impact on trade". It certainly has the potential to destroy the multi-billion dollar Australian organic industry and its export potential. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an international agreement signed by 166 governments worldwide, and the UN's food standards body Codex Alimentarius agree that all GM techniques differ from conventional breeding and that pre-market safety assessments are essential before GM organisms are used in food.

I support expanding the definition for 'gene technology' so FSANZ continues to assess and regulate all techniques and methods of genetic modification, other than conventional breeding. The proposal to deregulate new and emerging GM techniques and their food products, which pose new and unassessed risks, is completely unacceptable.

Thank you for taking my well-founded and informed concerns into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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