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To everyone with the power to influence our legislation.

I strongly oppose changes to the Food Code that would inhibit Australians from being able to choose whether or not we consume food that has been altered from its natural state. The Food Code changes will allow a wide range of GM foods, made using novel methods that have scant history of safe use, to be sold without safety assessment or labelling. And if we don't know whether food has been genetically modified, we can't make an informed choice about whether or not we want to eat it.

In addition, no company should be allowed to self-assess the safety of its products as commercial interests can lead to biases interfering with the assessment.

All GM foods should be independently assessed for their health and environmental hazards and risks, be labelled as GM, and be traceable. This will allow farmers, food producers, retailers, and shoppers to avoid them if they choose to do so. Not requiring this would undermine FSANZ's key responsibilities to ensure food safety and our right to know what is in our food.

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, especially since 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.

Those seeking to commercialise GM plants, animals and microbes should play no role in deciding how or 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". 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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