

Date: June 20, 2011

Protect the choice to farm GM-free. Protect the choice to eat GM-free.

Thankyou for the opportunity to submit to the review of the Gene Technology Act 2000.

I submit my remarks initially as a mother and daughter. As the primary carer of young children and aging parents, my focus over the past two decades has been the health of the family, making food choices that best meet their individual needs. Or so I thought !! Until recently, I was completely unaware of genetically modified crops and food and that unknowingly we could have been eating GM food. What have I subjected my family to? What is the long term effect? So began my self-education, but the strong pushback has been alarming!! So many scientists around the world have been **sacked, sued, sidelined or slandered** for showing doubt about the health safety of GM crops and food, including Pusztai, Chopra, Seralini, Carasco. Others have **called for a moratorium** on GM crops and food, including the Institute of Science in Society <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/list.php> ,and the American Academy of Environmental Medicine <http://www.aeonline.org/gmopost.html>.

I submit my remarks also as a science and mathematics graduate, a teacher, and an IT professional. I am also a member of Just Food, a consumer network, and the GM-free Australia Alliance. My remarks concern GM crops and GM food. I make no comment about GM in medical applications as I rely on the regulatory regime of pharmaceuticals and the care arrangements of the medical profession to have the necessary stringent protocols in place.

The creation of GM food by cross-species genetic transfer assisted by bacteria, viruses and antibiotics, is radically new science in the hands of multinational chemical companies. Genetic engineering contravenes the millennia of vertical genetic inheritance and respect for nature's species barriers. Risk mitigation should be paramount. Why the secrecy? Why the media silence? Why the lack of independent testing? Why the lack of peer-reviewed studies? Why the lack of labelling? Why the lack of education? Why the lack of monitoring? Why the lack of traceability? Why the lack of appropriate legislation? Why the lack of compensation considerations?

Allowing the usual rigours of scientific and technological processes to be bypassed on the vague notion of "substantial equivalence" is more to "assist the path to market" of GM, rather than to protect the public interest. **The role of the public regulator is to protect the public interest.**

The E.Coli breakout in Europe is a clear example of how difficult it is to trace the source of food-related illness. How would we know if GM foods are safe? Why do we not know where the GM farms are? Why does traceability stop? Why do we not have "derived from" GM labelling? The GM industry knows. Why are they permitted to declare the details "Commercial in Confidence"? Many markets, especially in the EU, request GM-free produce. Beekeepers are supposed to declare that their bee hives are not within a 5-10km radius of GM crops. Sensitive sites such as organic farms are supposed to protect themselves from contamination from GM crops. How can they do this when

the location of the GM crops is not known? **Unconditional and unrestricted GM licences are NOT workable and must NOT be granted.**

The mantra of the GM industry is co-existence, yet GM crops are predatory. The implementation of GM crops is designed to contaminate due to the secrecy and the lack of responsibility and accountability by the GM industry. The evidence of contamination is mounting worldwide. See the GM Contamination Register which includes Australian events:

<http://www.gmcontaminationregister.org/>

In 2010, the US Department of Justice and US Department of Agriculture held an inquiry interviewing farmers across the United States. GM crops and corporate control of agriculture is NOT working. The people, the communities and the US economy are SICK and GETTING SICKER. From figures on its own website, Monsanto claims to “rarely” sue farmers for patent infringement, but on average in the US, **Monsanto sues one farmer a month !!!** Australia should NOT follow this model. Listen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1axAqJGEXI>

In Canada, the only organic canola that can now be grown is isolated on Prince Edward Island. There is currently a pre-emptive class action against Monsanto to prevent farmers being sued. Australia should NOT follow this model.

Monsanto is repeatedly ranked by Covalence as the least ethical company in the world. Monsanto has shareholder class actions against it for overstating its worth to the stock exchange. It has farmer class actions against it for overstating the yield of Roundup Ready 2 trait. Yet the WA government has entered into partnership with Monsanto by selling off almost 20% of the public plant breeding company InterGrain to develop GM wheat. **Is this legal? Where is the due diligence? Is this serving the public interest?**

The canola standard that was put in place in Australia in 2008 gives no recognition to GM-free canola, no recognition to organic.

CSO1 Canola, which includes all canola, conventional and herbicide tolerant canola including Roundup Ready® canola; and

CSO1-A non-GM canola, same quality and trade parameters as Canola with the additional requirement for an adventitious presence of OGTR approved events at 0.9% or below.

This surely is not legal?

I will conclude with an excerpt from a recent letter in the Countryman by a WA farmer:

In rural communities there is increasing tension and conflict as farmers take up the OGTR approved GM canola. People feel strongly because they know the Act does not protect them. The regulators do not require independent testing, they do not take into account the significant evidence of health impacts reported, they do not allow for the many scientists alternative views, they ignore the gene pollution being created, and they base their approvals on the flawed concept of substantial equivalence.

These regulations inform farmers that the GM grain grown is safe to feed animals and deliver into the food chain. Yet the shaping of these regulations has been described as corrupt to the core and anyone who has read "The World According to Monsanto" will know exactly how and why this has eventuated.

The fight is out in the communities between consumer and farmer, farmer and neighbour, members within organizations and soon to be in legal courts. It is divisive and unnecessary and a clear failing of governance and of the Act. People need to know this and act to protect food, farms, the environment and communities.