



Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash
Minister for Rural Health
Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate

Ref No: MC16-001122

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your emails of 21 December 2015 and 8 January 2016 about new breeding techniques and the composition of the Board of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

In Australia, genetically modified (GM) organisms are regulated under the *Gene Technology Act 2000* which is administered by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR).

The OGTR is currently conducting a technical review of the Gene Technology Regulations 2001 to ensure the level of regulation of activities with GM organisms remains commensurate with risk according to current science. The review aims to improve clarity regarding regulatory capture of new technologies. Broad consultation with the public, states and territories, regulated stakeholders, industry and scientific experts will be undertaken before any amendment proposals are finalised.

The sale of GM food is regulated by state and territory food laws that apply the provisions of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code), administered by FSANZ under Standard 1.5.2. FSANZ is not proposing to change the legal framework for GM foods. Any proposed changes to the Code would be considered through a public process, and include public consultation.

I also wish to correct some inaccuracies in Mr Jones's response to your email of 21 December 2015 which referred to amendments to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (Forum on Food Regulation and Other Measures) Bill 2015.

I can assure you that the intention of these amendments is only to broaden the pool of potential candidates to ensure the FSANZ Board has the right mix of skills for FSANZ's future work requirements. The total number of board members with consumer rights, science, public health, and food industry expertise would be no different to the current membership of the FSANZ Board.

Additionally, the proposed changes maintain the requirement to have at least one member with each of the above expertise. The National Health and Medical Research Council will still be able to, as will other science organisations, nominate potential candidates for appointment on the FSANZ Board. However, broadening the selection pool ensures FSANZ has the most appropriate science expertise on the Board to meet its future work requirements.

The proposed amendments to the FSANZ Board composition are the result of a review of the FSANZ Board appointment process conducted in 2013. The current Board appointment process had been in place since 2002 and it was considered timely for a review to ensure that suitable high quality candidates are nominated for the FSANZ Board and are assessed against robust criteria that reflects the contemporary requirements of the FSANZ Board. The recommended changes arising from the review were endorsed by the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum for Food Regulation.

Furthermore, the proposed amendments in the Bill have no bearing on how GM foods are regulated in Australia or the regulatory capture of new breeding techniques.

I trust you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

FIONA NASH

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

