

6<sup>th</sup> December, 2012

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand

**“Application A1073 - Food derived from Herbicide-tolerant Soybean DAS-44406-6”.**

I wish to firstly state that I strongly object to the calling for public submissions on important matters of public interest in the month of December. I note that the previous round of submissions in 2010 was also in the month of December when communities are typically very busy with end of year and pre Christmas activities and many families are already on holidays. Communities are weary of this urgency in the lodging of submissions at the end of year. In the interest of better community awareness of the issues relating to this Application and the safety assessment of food derived from **Herbicide-tolerant Soybean DAS-44406-6**, I am requesting that there be better publicity of the matter and an extension of the due date for public submissions.

I am opposed to Application A1073 which is a GM soybean with altered DNA genetically engineered to tolerate three chemicals 2,4-D, glufosinate ammonium and glyphosate. 2,4-D is an active ingredient in Agent Orange and glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup. It is simply not correct to suggest that there are no risks to public health from the introduction of GM foods designed to tolerate herbicides that are known poisons with links to cancers and neurological diseases.

- The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) as the pesticide regulator has failed to protect Australians from the harmful effects of pesticides that have infiltrated our lives not only through their widespread use in agriculture but also through their widespread use in our parks, bush land, verges and river foreshores. We have seen the sorry saga of government- employed pesticide applicators who were made chronically ill by Agent Orange for the killing of weeds in the Kimberleys. A toxic cocktail of weed poisons is still being used today. It is simply outrageous that our health and environmental authorities have allowed this contamination of our soils, trees and waterways to occur with virtually no thorough and independent testing to assess the harm both to the environment and public health.
- Now, to make matters worse, FSANZ, is involved in the approval process that will cause further harm, not only due to the risks of the GM technology itself but also due to the harm from the increased pesticide residues in the GM food. Our politicians and regulators must be made accountable for allowing the growing of GM crops, the importation of GM foods and our lax labelling laws.
- It is an absurd statement to suggest that “the use of herbicides or the actual growing of GM crops “is beyond the remit of FSANZ which is concerned primarily with the safety of food that is consumed.” - If the food that is consumed is derived from GM crops that are herbicide resistant and grown by farmers who use herbicides liberally in the knowledge that the use of herbicides will not adversely affect their crop, how can FSANZ guarantee to consumers that the GM food does not or will not contain higher levels of herbicides than conventional foods?
- Is FSANZ aware of the herbicide or pesticide spraying practices of individual farmers in the US or any other GM growing country, and what level and frequency of testing of these toxic chemical residues in our food would be undertaken and at what

financial cost ?

- If FSANZ cannot guarantee that GM foods that are consumed do not or will not contain more herbicide residues as a result of the crops' herbicide resistance and FSANZ cannot guarantee that the herbicide residues will not adversely affect human or animal health, will FSANZ exercise its duty of care and moral obligation to adopt a precautionary approach such as described in the Wingspread Precautionary Principle? The Applicant and FSANZ must bear the burden of proof that the foods containing these GM products will cause no harm to human or animal health as a result of being derived from herbicide resistant crops and their likely higher residues of herbicides, as well as from the GM technology itself.
- FSANZ is failing in its duty of care in approving more GM applications when current labelling laws do not adequately protect the public from unsolicited exposure to GM foods and ingredients that are imported from unspecified countries of origin.
- The **health of our children must come first** above all other trade or financial considerations.
- There is already much concern in the community about imported foods and the inadequacies of labelling that often simply states that a product is "made from local and imported ingredients". Consumers do not know the origin of many of their foods and do not have faith in the current system of labelling. There is no reason why consumers should trust that labelling will adequately protect them and their children from unsolicited exposure to potentially toxic and allergenic GM foods.
- It is not correct, as has been suggested by FSANZ, that there is no substantiated scientific opposition to the growing, production and consumption of GM foods. Our health and regulatory authorities are failing to exercise a precautionary approach and it is appalling that "approval can be revoked or the risk management strategies altered" after an application has been approved when so much controversy exists prior to the approval of such applications.
- Western Australians had a very significant petition ignored by the Barnett Government when Minister Redman lifted the bans on the growing of GM crops. This behaviour by the current state government has been nothing less than dictatorial. Regardless of any political pressure, it is important for FSANZ to ensure the safety of food consumed by our children and to protect public health now and into the future.
- If "FSANZ has a legal obligation to consider all applications seeking to amend the Code within a statutory timeframe and this cannot be held up.." there is an obvious failure in the law and the law must be changed so that there are adequate measures in place to ensure that FSANZ is not pressured into making decisions that go against the public interest with the potential to adversely affect public health. Simply planning to revoke, if necessary, what may be a bad and potentially harmful decision with widespread implications is not best practice risk assessment.
- The statement about its legal obligation reflects badly on FSANZ. There is an expectation in the community that FSANZ, in making its decisions, will do no harm to public health and that it will err on the side of caution rather than be pressured to approve applications of a highly controversial nature. FSANZ must gain the confidence of consumers but the authority's perceived need or legal obligation to speedily approve applications is seriously undermining its reputation.

There must be no approval for this and similar GM applications without firstly assessing the results of independent, whole-of-life and multi-generational feeding studies. This has not occurred. In Western Australia we have already seen the tragic contamination of organic farms with GM canola due to the reckless attitude of our state government. The WA Health Minister, Kim Hames and WA Agriculture and Food Minister, Terry Redman sit on the Ministerial Forum that gives final approval to GM food imports. This dictatorial government must stop making bad decisions. We call on them too, to stop the harm to our children's health by not approving this and other GM applications. Your obligations above all else are to food safety and public health.

Alex Jones

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