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Re: Strongly recommend the inclusion of Golden Rice in the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) code

As a professional, academic, plant scientist I have followed, and taught about, the Golden Rice Project since its inception. In 2011-2012 I was a Jefferson Science Fellow with the United States Department of State advising on biotech crops. In this capacity I studied and advised on the problems generated by Low Level Presence (LLP) of biotech crops in international shipments. I also travelled to eleven countries lecturing on biotech crops and discussing with academics, researchers, agronomists, farmers and government officials. This included two trips to the Philippines, with a visit to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and meeting with leaders and other personnel involved in the Golden Rice Project. Annually since that time I have, with other faculty, taught a course at Cornell University entitled *The GMO Debate – Science and Society*. In July 2017 I put together and spoke at a session on genetically engineered crops at the International Botanical Congress in Shenzhen China. In my talk I included the latest data on Golden Rice as provided by the head of the project at IRRI.

It is my professional opinion, as result of knowledge of the project, communicating with project Golden Rice Project leaders, and readings in the scientific literature, that:

- Golden Rice (GR), possessing carotene, a precursor of vitamin A in the rice grain, is an important nutritional benefit to many persons in South and Southeast Asia in that it will prevent blindness in any who, without it, suffer from vitamin A deficiency.
- This is the most efficient and cost-effective way of enhancing vitamin A in the diet of such persons.
- The carotene content is sufficient and is absorbed from the food adequately to make a significant contribution to alleviating vitamin A deficiency.
- Golden Rice is perfectly safe to consume and for the environment, and represents no hazard to consumers, farmers, or the local populace.
- The latest Golden Rice varieties are similar in every way to their non-GR counterpart varieties, and can therefore be grown by farmers in the same way that they now grow the non-GR varieties, and consumed in the same way as consumers now consume non-GR rice.
- While I realize that there is no reason for Golden Rice to be grown in Australia or New Zealand it is crucial to have GR safety approved so that any low level presence in shipments does not lead to the rejection of any shipment.

In conclusion I strongly recommend that Golden Rice is included in the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) code with no further delay.



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