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To whom it concerns,

Polling shows that most global citizens don't want to eat genetically modified (GM) foods. GM foods carry risks. Why should regulators move to deny consumers the right to reject GM foods? Is there a reason? The right to make this choice is fundamental to human freedom.

Therefore, all GM foods should be independently assessed for their health and environmental hazards and risks, be labelled as GM, and be traceable to enable us the freedom to choose what we eat, to make our own decisions for our personal health and nutrition. .

I therefore, strongly oppose changes to the Food Code that would allow a wide range of GM foods, using novel methods that have a scant history of safe use, to be sold without safety assessment or labelling. These would include stealth foods like meat and milk from some genetically modified animals and substances like vanilla and stevia produced by genetically modified microbes in factory vats. FSANZ must ensure that it not only retains, but strengthens its ability to fulfil its key responsibilities to ensure food safety and our right to know what is in our food.

The history of GMOs demonstrates unequivocally that Agrochemical companies cannot be trusted to carry out self-assessments of safety dossiers. Not only does this action feed into a direct conflict of interest that therefore, makes no rational sense, these companies have an appalling record of manipulating data to promote dangerous products.

Gene editing techniques are harder to detect, which means that genetic changes that could never occur in nature, could lead to widespread genetic damage and these would go undetected . The very notion to change food regulation to allow self-assessment by developers, raises a red flag, i.e. the regulatory intent to deregulate GMOs. I ask again -- WHY?

Again, the history of deep conflicts of interest in regulation is clearly apparent in this matter, in that FSANZ has relied on advice from scientists with serious conflicts of interest. Any advice that concludes that these new GM foods pose no greater risks than existing foods, is self-revealing. Clearly, those seeking to commercialise GM plants, animals and microbes should play no role in deciding how - or even whether - foods derived from them should be regulated. This principle requires no clarification.

The proposed changes would make Australia one of very few countries in the world to allow genetically modified animal products into the food chain with no regulation or labelling. This would cause serious problems with Australia's 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.

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