

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

re: labelling of GE modified food

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my concerns over the Genetically Modified Food industry and its infiltration into Australia. There has been very little open debate about the effects of GM food and its industry. Why such silence from the Environmental Minister, Senator Robert Hill on the issue or even our Prime Minister, John Howard?

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics in the UK argue that GM food crops are necessary to combat global hunger, citing figures that there will be another 3 billion mouths to feed. However, they also call for consumer choice ie. clear labelling of foods that are genetically modified and measures that protect the consumer from potential dangers of GM foods. 'There should be government rules to guide the technology and research should be conducted by, and for, the public, rather than by commercial interests governed only for market forces.' (Guardian Weekly, June 6 1999, p 11.)

Concern for public health rather than commercial interest should be the focus of the Australian Governments role in determining the viability and safety of GM crops and food products. The technology is still in its infancy and such an impetuous undertaking by the Australian government is not only short sighted but tantamount to the wanton destruction of the biodiversity of the land and to the publics rights and health.

Such effects of GM crops have already been illustrated by the 'terminator' crops in India. Thanks to the draconian contracts set by Monsanto, farmers in the region buy cotton seeds with promises that their cash crops will boom with these enhanced GM seeds. However, when their crops failed, and they had no money to buy another batch of seeds (the 'terminator' seeds do not regeminate), farmers had to sell their land or at its worst, 500 committed suicide, unable to repay the crippling debt.

When crops in Australia fail who will pay the debt of the farmers? The

government? Monsanto? It is clear that farmers will inherit the debt and despair set by 'global markets' and Senator Robert Hill's eagerness to embrace a technology that could have serious consequences for generations for the sake of short term monetary gain.

The people of Australia have a right to choose what food they wish to consume genetically modified or not. For the Australian government to brandish this aside for the interests of foreign multinationals shows a nefarious contempt for the rights of all Australians and their children.

I urge the Standing Committee for a clear labelling of genetically modified foods, freedom of information that unveils the seditious veil of commercial confidentiality, an advisory body to monitor GM foods and to seriously consider the consequences of such GM crops in Australia when at a time organic produce is growing exponentially.

Sincerely,

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