

This submission is provided as a consumer who reads product labels of foodstuffs and avoids all GM products in preference for items that are uncontaminated. There is a vast difference between breeding a new type of grain resulting from pollination between two compatible grain varieties and that of performing mutations in genetically engineering grains with toxic organophosphates, such as glyphosate.

Consumer Rights:

In discussion of GM labelling laws on consumer products, I strongly support the current requirement that the GM market should remain regulated. Informative food labels allow me to decide what I wish to buy and, because I value my health and wellbeing, I DO NOT choose to buy GM products! For this reason, I purchase those products that specify they are NOT GM.

In support of stronger regulations:

Labelling laws must be extended further to provide full information on all GM ingredients because all consumers have a right to be fully informed in their choice of foodstuffs. I have not yet seen products that supply full information, advising of GM ingredients, except in imported goods. The Australian market appears to be lagging in this requirement. It is the democratic right of all Australian consumers to be fully informed through comprehensive GM labelling of these ingredients.

Protection of Farmers:

It is vital that all State governments provide stricter regulations on GM crops: Australia needs strong protection for farmers. Contamination occurs wherever GM crops are grown and the status of 'organic' farming is then destroyed, as a result. Farmers such as Steve Marsh should not have to do battle to retain their organic status. Our export market is currently supported by State bans, due to sound reasons: international consumers do not want to eat GM foods, due to unacceptable risks to their health and to the environment. Organic farmers suffer financial loss in situations that place their livelihoods at risk. Personally, it is important to me to be able to buy organic produce.

Social and legal responsibilities of Government:

When our society has reached the point where consumers have to make a submission in support of the right to know what we consume ... our right to uncontaminated food and drink ... I believe we are in a very sorry state of affairs.

Our government must then question whether medieval laws of 13th century England, evocative of the Assize of Bread and Ale, may actually be a good deal more enlightened than that of the present day. The proposal of the Productivity Commission to lift regulations deprives Australian citizens of basic consumer rights that may be rightfully claimed through our historical links with the origins of civilisation.

When basic tenets requiring the delivery of pure food and drink are tossed aside, consumers may rightly consider that this shows a complete lack of regard for basic social rights. Productivity is one thing... however, it should never be at the expense of ethical social rights and public welfare. I believe that, in mutual respect for these basic tenets, both the Worshipful Company of Bakers and the Brewers' Guild would turn over in their respective graves at the prospect of their abandonment.

One must ask: is the wholesome quality of our bread and beverages now considered so worthless that historical laws, enacted to preserve the health and wellbeing of citizens, may be recklessly dispensed with? Are consumers to be forced to blindly buy GM-contaminated foodstuffs?

In conclusion, it is clear that the proposal of the Productivity Commission is neither in the interests nor the benefit of the Australian public. I ask that the intention of the law, to uphold the rights and protections of consumers, be rightfully preserved and maintained in accordance with this interest.

Regards,
Christine Bennett