



## **GENETIC MODIFICATION OF FOOD**

Genetic modification (genetic engineering; abbreviated to GM or GE) of food applies gene technology in which recombinant DNA techniques alter the heritable genetic material of living cells or organisms. The justification for their use is improved yields and reduced need for herbicides for weed control.

Controversy exists regarding the safety of genetically-modified foods for human consumption. Other criticisms relate to the patenting and control of sale of seeds by the companies which manufacture genetically-modified seeds. Significant resistance to GM in Australia continues mainly from consumers who have concerns about the technology.

Each of us must make our own decisions about the safety of foods containing genetically-modified components. On one hand are the official views of Food Standards Australia and New Zealand and the Gene Technology Regulator; and on the other is the view exemplified by Greenpeace which publishes [The truefood guide](#).

### **Regulation of genetically-modified plants**

The organisation Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) approves GM foods for sale in Australia. GM crops and foods must overcome significant regulatory hurdles before they are allowed into the Australian and New Zealand food supply or the environment. These assessments are rigorous, thorough and independent.

Approval of a GM food is contingent upon an independent pre-market safety assessment which is undertaken by the scientists of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). These assessments are published at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au) and are open for comment before each application is approved. In evaluating the suitability of any new GM food, FSANZ uses a process that is based on principles developed internationally, with Australian participation, and which is followed by Canada, Europe, Japan, and the US.

Environmental assessment of GM organisms, including GM crops, is the responsibility of the Gene Technology Regulator. The scientific risk assessment for each GM crop is rigorous and transparent. The Regulator will not approve cultivation of a GM crop unless satisfied that human health and the environment are protected.

Australian laws for the labelling of genetically engineered (GE) foods are administered by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand – see [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au): Food labelling. See Standard 1.5.2: Food Produced Using Gene Technology. The label on a package of genetically modified food must include the statement 'genetically modified' in conjunction with the name of that food or ingredient or processing aid. There are exemptions from labelling depending on the concentration of GM ingredients in the food, and components in food sold in restaurants, bakeries and take-aways are not required to be labelled.

## **The truefood guide**

*The truefood guide* prepared by Greenpeace rates food brands and products as Green (GE-free) or Red (may contain GE ingredients). GE crops were introduced in Australia in 2008. GE canola is found in many foods from margarine and vegetable oil, to ice-cream, breads and sauces. Ingredients derived from soy, maize and cottonseed are also in many food products in Australia. GE products may be incorporated in animal feed and therefore in dairy products, eggs and meat. For further information, visit [www.truefood.org.au](http://www.truefood.org.au)

## **What you can do**

- To avoid genetically modified products, choose fresh unprocessed food, labelled 'certified organic', 'GE-free', 'Not Genetically Modified'
- Refer to the Greenpeace Truefood Guide