

News Media Release: June 2, 2008
Attention: News Editors/Chiefs of Staff

Gene Ethics backs WA Government call on GM foods

Gene Ethics fully supports WA Premier Alan Carpenter's call today for labels on all Genetic Manipulated (GM) foods and for all GM food approvals to stop while these unsafe foods are fully safety tested.

"We back Premier Carpenter's call for labels on all GM foods and for Food Standards Australia NZ (FSANZ) to stop all approvals of GM foods until conclusive safety tests are done to prove they are safe to eat," says Gene Ethics Director Bob Phelps.

"We join the Premier in calling on all Australian governments – through the Health Ministerial Council - to swiftly meet the public's rights to safe food and to know a food is GM.

"All governments must back the WA call for basic changes to the present GM food standard.

"The GM giants must prove their GM products are safe before they reach the shelves, so FSANZ should stop all GM food approvals until real safety tests rule out allergies, damage to vital organs and links to cancer.

"As Premier Carpenter says it is 'unbelievable and unacceptable' that FSANZ relies mostly on GM company data to say GM foods are safe to eat.

"Governments are lagging far behind some supermarkets – Coles, Foodland and Woolworths - that have begun to meet customer concern with GM-free house-brands.

"Though 93% of Australian adults want all foods made using GM techniques to be labelled, most GM foods - refined soy, corn, canola and cottonseed oils, starches and sugars - are all exempt under the present GM food standard 1.5.2," Mr Phelps says.

"The enforcement of GM labelling is key to its success but FSANZ even fails to monitor compliance with its present weak guidelines on GM labels and identity preservation.

"This is unfair to shoppers, and also fosters irrational and uninformed behaviour.

"Government and big business aggressively support free markets, but free markets only work where labels fully inform shoppers, so that everyone has real choice and can make rational decisions on what to eat.

"WA Food Minister Kim Chance concurs with our outrage that FSANZ also approves GM foods never intended or approved for human consumption anywhere else in the world - such as GM corn for making ethanol.

"All GM food approvals must now be reviewed by FSANZ!" Mr Phelps concludes.

More comment: Bob Phelps 03 9347 4500 or 0449 769 066