

EVIDENCE Steve Goldthorpe

TOPIC GMO PC131/PC18

SUB# 013

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**Hearing presentation**

By Steve Goldthorpe

(Original submission WDC PC131/64 in support)

By way of introduction I would just like to say a few words in the context of Margaret Hicks' submission.

I acknowledge and respect Margaret's fundamental ethical view that manipulation of natural genetic material is an offence against nature by the dominant species, which is humankind.

However, my philosophical view differs markedly from Margaret's. I believe that the Creator God gave mankind dominion over other species, both plants and animals. I believe that mankind has been given an intellect that is superior to all other animals in order to be the wise custodian of the Creator's natural world.

With that powerful position comes a threefold responsibility:-

- Responsibility to acknowledge and respect the Creator's design of the natural world;
- Responsibility to work within the Creator's design for the shared benefit of all of mankind; and
- Responsibility to be wise custodians of the natural world for the benefit of future generations.

In that context, manipulation of the natural genetic structure of plants and animals is to interfere with the Creator's design of the natural world. Mankind now has developed sufficient combined intellect and ability to make changes to the fundamental way the natural world works. I question whether that is the intent of the Creator.

As Margaret says "*The fact that we can do something does not mean that we should do it*" The long term impact of such interference with the natural world cannot be predicted. Any Genetic Engineering developments must take place only with extreme caution and then only for very deliberate and specific beneficial purposes and under very controlled conditions.

In the context of this ethical view of Genetic Engineering, my submission requires that the release of any Genetically Engineered materials in Northland should be prohibited until these three conditions are met: -.

- It is proven beyond any reasonable doubt that there are no potential adverse effects arising from the incorporation of GMOs into any plants or animals, either natural species or farmed species;
  - In light of the evidence that we have heard today a high standard of proof is required, in particular a very long period of quarantine is required to allow time for adverse effects to be manifest.
- There is proven significant environmental, social and economic benefit to Northland that would arise from the introduction of GMOs into the region;
  - In the light of the evidence we have heard today it is likely that claimed benefits can be short-lived.

- There is universal acceptance in the global food market of some claimed benefits of GMOs other than just production cost reduction.
  - In the light of the evidence we have heard today it clear that there is a substantial distrust of genetically engineered foodstuffs in the market place.

I have some experience as a practitioner of the Resource Management Act and in the preparation of assessment of environmental effects of proposals. My first condition, parallels the RMA in requiring that any adverse effects of a proposal must be avoided, remedied or mitigated. I know that in the case of a new process, which has not been proven in practice, a thorough assessment of environmental effects, including estimates of potential effects, must be carried out. In the case of the practical application of a GMO a thorough wide-ranging assessment of environmental effects would be required. The HSNO act, on which MfE, place great faith, is only one tool in the tool box of assessment measures that would be need to be used to determine whether or not there was a significant risk of adverse consequences.

Another point in my submission refers to the geography of Northland. The statement from MfE suggest that different rules for different parts of the country would be unworkable because there are no firm boundaries between regions. My evidence takes issue with that principle. The Northland region is effectively agriculturally isolated from the rest of New Zealand because it is separated by the non-agricultural conurbation of Auckland. Northland is like an agricultural island. Therefore in practical terms it would be quite feasible to have different rules from other regions in the country.

In light of these comments, I wholeheartedly agree with the precautionary principle in the WDC/FNDC plan change, but I also want any EPA approved EFG experiments or field trials prohibited until the exacting conditions outlined above have been met.

Steve Goldthorpe

13<sup>th</sup> June 2016