EVIDENCE Mike Finlayson
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Evidence of Mike Finlayson. Tuesday June 14 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the proposed plan changes.

I am not an expert witness but I would like to give you a little information on my background

I moved from Auckland to Herekino, near Kaitaia, in early 2000 with my partner and young family onto a regenerating native bush block.

I have been either a committee member of chair of the following groups

The Herekino Landcare Group

The Kaitaia Community House

The Far North Environment Centre

The Northland Conservation Board

The Te Hiku Conservation Board.

I would like to note that I am not speaking on behalf of these groups.

Not long after moving North I became involved in our local Landcare group, specifically working on controlling Kahili Ginger which was running rampant among regenerating native bush in our valley.

That experience and noting the destruction of our native species by pests and predators set me on a journey of discovery.

I found that possums and rats feast on our natives and controlling them makes a huge difference

I found that a stoat, a real nasty predator, is very difficult to control

I found that Kahili Ginger was massively intrusive, smothering the emerging native undergrowth and taking over whole valleys. Our group has put over 30,000 hours into this one eradication project (with the help of NRC, DOC etc) and still has much to do before it is eradicated.

But I found that with good information, a well thought out plan, the appropriate resources and a large dose of persistence that we could indeed control these pests.

During a Conservation Board visit in the Waipoua forest we came to understand how the Kauris were being kill by a tiny phytophthora organism.

We learnt that this was brought into the country by the Forest Service either within soil contained on either machinery or juvenile Kauri Trees.

This then spread around the Kauri nursery they were establishing and was later transported all over the upper North Island when the Kauri were distributed from Kaitaia to Coromandel.

We now have a situation where it is very likely we will see the demise of large Kauri stands and if we do not halt the spread of this organism we may lose this species all together

I can not help but note the irony of such a small organism bringing down our massive forest giants.

It seems the smaller an organism is the harder it is to destroy. As the speaker before me stated 'once it's in the environment it's there for good'. In other words, if we found it to be a destructive organism there would be nothing we could do about it.

All of the problems we have been trying to remediate are the unintended consequences of someone's bright idea. The people that brought in these pests had no idea what they were actually doing. Nor did they have to bear the cost.

How safe is GMO and what are the benefits? It is difficult to accurately analyse because there is so much that we do not know. But here are some to the things we do know.

The FDA (US Food and Drug Administration) tells us that GMO food is safe, that it is the same as conventional food.

Why I have problems believing this is that the FDA and Monsanto have a 'revolving door' policy of moving Monsanto executives onto the FDA and FDA officials into Monsanto. The FDA relies on Monsanto to act ethically so how 'ethical' are they?

They are a corporate and as such they exist to create profit.

They buy seed companies and destroy the seed stock, eliminating seeds that may have otherwise competed with their varieties. In my mind this is ecocide. It seems like they want to control the worlds seed stock and will do so at any cost.

In India, the extra cost of their 'Terminator' seeds (which won't produce in the next generation) have pushed thousands of farmers to suicide.

In Mexico their GMO corn has cross bred with native heirloom species rendering all corn there GMO

In Europe, where their relationship with the regulators is not so cosy GMOs have been banned in 17 countries. Roundup has recently had its license revoked and a variety of lawsuits are in process.

So personally I would not trust them nor would I trust the information coming from the US on GMO safety.

The relatively new CRISPR gene splicing technology could offer benefits because it is more precise and easier to use. On one hand it removes risks that present with the older form of gene splicing. But because this gene drive technology can create a 'chain reaction' it has the potential to drive a trait through a whole species, changing it forever. At present the focus is on producing a mosquito that will no longer transmit Malaria. While this seems a good idea, given the human cost of Malaria, one wonders what would happen if it worked its way up the food chain. The unintended consequences could be catastrophic.

One of the most touted benefits of GMO is the 'Feed the World' mantra. It is claimed that GMO could boost food production so that people would no longer starve.

The fact is that there is already enough food to feed the world, it's just the way it's distributed. Corporates send food to where they can make the most money and that's not likely to be Bangladesh. Corporates don't care if people starve, they care about profits. During the potato famine In Ireland potatoes were shipped to England instead of feeding the starving Irish because it was more profitable. Nothing much has changed here. Regardless of all this studies show no overall gain in productivity using GMO crops.

The reduction in the use of herbicide / pesticides was another claimed benefit of using GMO crops but there has been no evidence reduction. Monsanto tried in NZ to get the glysophate residue on food increased by 300% but failed but has succeeded in other jurisdictions.

In NZ we are developing a GMO ryegrass that will reduce cow's methane emissions. While this may seem worthwhile we may want to pay attention to what that such a move may do to NZ's 'Clean, Green' image. I believe we should live up to the reality of this image instead of just using it as a marketing tool. Feeding our cows on GMO ryegrass has the potential to damage our image much more than the recent 1080 scare. We know that GMO organisms can reside in the stomach (and cows have a few of those!) and cross the placenta. How is it going to affect the quality of the milk?

We do know that some of our largest trading partners have rejected GMO food outright. This includes China, Japan and an increasing amount of European states. So why would we want to produce more milk when the world is awash with it? Surely we would be better to produce what is in demand and currently organic milk powder is selling for $US 14,000 a ton. Compare this with conventional milk powder sitting on $US2,500, a price that is sending a lot of our dairy farmers to the wall. It is just under six times the amount! If we are looking for economic benefits then GMO is not what we need.

In NZ there is a strong reticence toward GMO and the release of GMO crops into the environment. I ran in the last local body elections for the NRC Te Hiku seat, and then again in the bye election when the Councilor died, and in doing so I spoke with approximately 1200 people, mostly on Kaitaia's main street. <u>All but one was in favour of a ban on releasing GMO crops into our environment.</u> This was one of my four policy planks and I feel the support for it was reflected in the strong showing of a relatively unknown 'greenie' up against a well known local businessman. I came second by just 5 votes. Maori in particular have very strong feelings against GMO as it goes against the core of tikanga.

I would like you to imagine a NZ without all these pests I've been taking about. Let's go back 150 years and stop all those rats and cats and possums. Now imagine what NZ would be like now. Thriving native forests with birdlife so vibrant that it would be a huge tourist attraction. Tourism would be our main income earner, eclipsing dairy by a huge margin. What a wonderful scene!

We are now in a similar position. Looking forward what are our great grandchildren going to say about us? Did we do the right thing. What does their world look like?

I would like us to move forward with due caution so that they may live in the best possible environment.

I therefore support both plan changes in their entirety. Thankyou.

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• 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,

we

• There is proven significant environmental, social and economic benefit to

Northland that would arise from the introduction of GMOs into the region; and

• There is universal acceptance in the global food market of some claimed

benefits of GMOs other than just production cost reduction.

Horizontal gene transfer

We know that eating GE food means that it is transferred to the human gut, altering the bacteria, crosses the placenta - the effect of this may not be fully understood for decades – similar to smoking tobacco, but we are seeing evidence of DNA being modified in test animals

Huge body of evidence makes GE food a very contentious issue,

To see the Feds (at point 39) admit in evidence that there re liablitiy seem to be saying their will only be a liability IF the Council regulates Gmos