

Popular Support for NZ Remaining a GM Free Food Producer

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70% of New Zealanders would support this country's food production remaining GM Free, according to a new Colmar Brunton poll.

“Legislation now before Parliament should provide for New Zealand remaining a GM Free Food Producer for the next five years and protect against the economic risks of growing GM food. Currently the NOOM Bill paves the way for GM food releases once the moratorium expires in October” said Sustainability Council Executive Director, Simon Terry.

“Australia is leading the way. Three Australian states are committed to moratoria on the production of GM food, and two others have put up more targeted blocking measures. Each of these states has acted out of concern for the damage that could result to conventional food producers if GM crops are grown. They are concerned in particular that GM contamination will put off buyers from Europe and Asia.”

“The effect of these moves is that the first GM food crop to be approved by Australia's federal regulator - GM canola - will be blocked from being planted. Each of the states where canola is now grown has taken action.”

While polling of New Zealanders has regularly shown over 50% support for some form of moratorium on the outdoor use of all GM organisms, this new poll focuses on GM food production alone. It shows that once informed there is currently no commercial production of GM food, 70% would support a policy of growing only GM Free food and just 18% would oppose this. This poll does not specify any limit on how long the restriction on GM food production should last whereas a previous survey asked whether the restriction should operate only until there is export market acceptance of GM food and after informing respondents of European consumer resistance to GM food.

“New Zealand needs to support biological science research but it does not need to commercially produce GM food to do that. Progress in biotechnology is not an all or nothing package and New Zealand should undertake the required research while remaining a GM Free Food Producer for the next five years.”

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Reference: Colmar Brunton Poll for Sustainability Council

The poll was conducted in August with a sample size of 500 and a margin of error of +/- 4.4%.

Question: “While genetic modification is being used in medicine and research, there is no commercial production of genetically modified food in this country. Should New Zealand's food production remain GM free?”

Responses: Yes: 70%, No:18%, Don't know: 12%.