



GM Release Five Times More Risky for New Zealand

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New Zealand would be taking a much greater gamble than other nations if it adopted GM agriculture.

The Sustainability Council says agricultural produce accounts for nearly half New Zealand's export income.

"This is 5 times the OECD average and double the nearest country. For most developed nations, the figure is closer to 10% than New Zealand's 47.8% reliance", said Council Chairman Sir Peter Elworthy.

"This means that for New Zealand, the risk of adopting GM agriculture is 5 times greater than typical OECD nations."

"The EU is still our biggest single customer for agricultural products and 71% of Europeans say they do not want to eat GM food, no matter what level of testing has been applied" said Sir Peter.

The European Commission is currently working on traceability regimes that will allow more and more food produce to be traced to its point of origin and to pinpoint its makeup.

"If GM food continues to be rejected in the marketplace, there will be no hiding in the more sophisticated markets such as Europe", said Sir Peter.

"Yet, if New Zealand were to instead choose to hold back from GM agriculture, and brand its products as free of GMOs, this information would also reach, and potentially attract, overseas consumers".

According to economic research by Professor Caroline Saunders, of Lincoln University, New Zealand could be expected to obtain higher returns for its food exports if it were not a GM producer than if it embraced GM agriculture.

Her study across a range of export foods showed minimal additional returns under GM production at best, and distinct benefits under the zero or low GM option.

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**Agriculture as % of Total Exports
(1999 OECD figures)**

