

Dear Linda

**Re: Correspondence regarding Fonterra / Mainland cheese and butter manufactured and sold in New Zealand and the use of GE rennet**

I thank you for your emails during June and July regarding Fonterra's use of genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organism (GMO) rennet or ingredients.

Please find the responses to your questions outlined below.

- Do any of the Fonterra / Mainland cheeses or butter products use a GE / GMO rennet or any other GE / GMO ingredients or processes? Question applies to both your organic cheese and your conventional cheeses (i.e., non-organic certified).**

No, all Fonterra consumer branded natural cheese and butter products manufactured and sold in New Zealand are sourced from fresh, raw milk from cows that are not genetically modified.

They do not contain GMOs (i.e. novel DNA/protein) and do not use any genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organism (GMO) derived ingredients including GMO derived rennet. This applies to both our organic and conventional cheeses.

This is verified by vendor attestations and, where applicable (ie where GM varieties exist), identity preserved certification is provided to give confidence that segregation from GM sources has been maintained.

- What is your policy on GE / GMO ingredients and processes?**

Fonterra's biotechnology policy on the use of gene technology is currently under review due to the proposed regulatory changes in New Zealand. Our views are detailed in our response to the [Gene Technology Bill submission](#).

In summary:

Fonterra has a long history of innovation and we recognise the potential of modern biotechnologies.

Fonterra believes a more modern approach to gene technology can help speed up important research, lower development costs, and support innovation. Products developed using precision fermentation (produced in contained facilities) in particular may open future doors for innovation. We also believe that gene technology has the potential to improve on-farm productivity and environmental outcomes.

We recognise that the application of gene technology in New Zealand's farming system must be carefully assessed within the context of our unique pastoral model, due to the challenges of containment and market sensitivity.

We have strong traceability processes to meet the preferences and requirements of our customers and markets. We ensure that our products' genetic status<sup>1</sup> is verified, including for voluntary market claims such as 'organic.' Currently none of our Fonterra products globally contain novel DNA or protein from the use of gene technology.

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<sup>1</sup> The term GM or genetic status references the GM classification provided by our ingredient suppliers – for example that it does not contain novel DNA or protein, or that it has been derived from non-GM ingredients.

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- **Do you have any Identity Preservation (IP) systems in place to ensure your products (cheese / butter etc) are GE / GMO free and that you do not use any GE / GMO ingredients or rennet? This could include Fermentation-produced Chymosin (FPC). Unlike microbial rennet, FPC is produced by genetically modified microorganisms.**

Fonterra consumer branded natural cheese and butter products manufactured and sold in New Zealand, both conventional and organic, are not produced using GM derived ingredients and can be considered Identify Preserved, in that there is verification of traceability of each ingredient from non-GMO sources throughout the supply chain (noting feed to cows is considered separately from this as outlined below).

We do not use Fermentation-produced chymosin in Fonterra cheese manufactured in NZ.

- **Where does the rennet used in Fonterra dairy products come from? (i.e., who manufactures it – the rennet used in your dairy products)**

Fonterra consumer branded natural cheese manufactured and sold in New Zealand uses microbial rennet enzymes and calf rennet enzymes depending on the cheese product being manufactured. Microbial rennet is derived from a selected strain of non-GM fungus.

- **Where are the details of the certified rennet ingredients that Fonterra uses in its cheese production (for Fonterra conventional cheeses)?**

Details of the certified rennet ingredients used by Fonterra in cheese production are found in the official produce specification sheets and technical documentation from ingredient suppliers for each cheese product. These sheets specify the rennet source, certification status, and suitability for various diets.

- **Where is it stated that the rennet used in Fonterra dairy products (conventional as well as organic) is non-GE / GMO?**

Fonterra supplies dairy products and ingredients globally, and its product range includes non-GMO verified options, especially in its organic and certain speciality ranges.

In New Zealand, we only make explicit non-GMO claims for organic products. Non-GMO verification is inherent in Fonterra's organic range so customers would be clear the rennet was from a non-GMO source.

For conventional products Fonterra adheres to FSANZ labelling requirements, which require a statement on pack if novel DNA or protein is present.

- **What is Fonterra's policy about the use of imported animal feed, regarding GE/GMO content or possible content?**

New Zealand currently has no Genetically Modified (GM) species released in the environment, so all feed grown in New Zealand for Fonterra farmers is from non-GMO plants.

Small volumes of non-viable inputs potentially derived from GMOs are already present in Fonterra's non-organics supply chain through imported feed and non-dairy ingredients.

Organic farmers do not use this feed. This is managed via traceability processes and verified through the organic certification programmes.

When cows consume GM feed, GMO material does not appear in the milk.

We have completed a review with our Customer Call Centre following your original phone calls and emails. There was a system error that we have since rectified. We appreciate you bringing this to our attention so it could be addressed appropriately.

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We trust that these responses answer your questions. Thank you for getting in touch.

Yours sincerely,

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