



OIA26-0022

16 February 2026

Claire Bleakley
claire@gefrees.org.nz

Dear Claire Bleakley,

Thank you for your email of 18 January 2026 requesting information relating to the GM purple tomato. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982.

You requested the following:

1. *Please can you advise us of what NZ Biosecurity is doing about this issue?*
2. *How will you ensure that the GM purple tomato seed is made unviable?*

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is aware that the genetically modified (GM) purple tomato (A1333) has received approval by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). The FSANZ approval relates only to the use of the product as food in Australia and New Zealand. It does not permit the import of any GM organisms under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996. The FSANZ approval notes that “Food businesses in New Zealand intending to import fresh GM Purple Tomato would need to consult the EPA and seek advice from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) in relation to biosecurity requirements”.

Approval for the import and release of viable new organisms (including genetically modified organisms) is the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), under the HSNO Act. An EPA approval would be required before any GM tomato material capable of propagation could be imported into New Zealand – unless it can be shown that the material is not capable of reproducing the organism without human intervention. As part of any approval, the EPA would consider whether specific controls were needed, including to manage risks associated with propagation of viable material.

MPI is responsible for enforcing the new organism provisions of the HSNO Act. As part of this, MPI ensures that any imported new organisms are held and managed in accordance with the associated EPA approval. If the EPA was to issue an approval for the modified tomato in the future, MPI would ensure that all controls, including any that relate to seed viability, containment or prevention of cross-contamination, are effectively enforced, and would update our import health standards and border clearance processes as necessary.

We acknowledge the possibility that tomato seeds may be imported into New Zealand from countries such as the USA or Canada. To help prevent any import of unapproved GM material, MPI has updated its operating procedures and guidance for border inspectors to strengthen clearance processes for tomato seed. This will minimise the likelihood that any GM seed is released into New Zealand without the required approval.

Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Janine Collier

For Lisa Winthrop
Director, Biosecurity Import & Export Standards