



appendix 3

Outcomes of Consultation: Submissions
from the Public

Section contents

3.	Analysis of Public Submissions	22
3.11	Global developments	91
	Background	91
	Outline of this section	91
	Partnership with nature	91
	Economic globalisation	92
	Biotechnology revolution	92
	Consumer responses to genetic modification	92
	Legal and policy responses to genetic modification	93

3.11 Global developments

Background

The Warrant, under item (h) focuses on the global context in which New Zealand genetic modification activities occur or may occur. It called for information on:

the global developments and issues that may influence the manner in which New Zealand may use, or limit the use of, genetic modification, genetically modified organisms and products

In responding to this request for information, submitters looked to the global trends that are influencing, or are likely to influence in the future, genetic modification activities and people's responses to them. Thus, they reflected on trends such as a shift from human dominion over nature to partnership, the globalisation of the economy, the biotechnology revolution, consumer responses to genetic modification, increasing recognition of indigenous rights and legal responses to genetic modification.

Outline of this section

This section discussed submitters' views under five main headings:

- partnership with nature
- economic globalisation
- biotechnology revolution
- consumer responses to genetic modification
- legal responses to genetic modification

Partnership with nature

Some public submitters argued that a rethink was needed about the way humans exploit nature. A switch to sustainable (usually organic) agricultural methods was seen as a first step towards shifting from people claiming their right to have dominion over nature to working with nature. This push to a “partnership with nature” was seen as a global trend rapidly gaining ground, whereas genetic modification was seen as a continuation of the polluting “domination of nature”

approach that many submitters identified as the greatest threat to global environmental health.

Often public submitters explicitly rejected the argument that environmental resource pressures justified genetic modification. Many submitters believed there was more than enough food in the world to feed the growing population. Food supply problems were viewed as distribution problems resulting from corruption, war, and lack of moral initiative on the part of developed countries. Many submitters viewed other apparent resource problems as the justifications of pro-genetic modification spokespeople (loss of arable land, pollution, and pests) and indicative of problems stemming from “the way we have been doing things” since the Green Revolution.

Economic globalisation

Public submitters often explicitly identified globalisation as a bad trend and one that has resulted in increased foreign ownership of New Zealand. They attributed this globalisation to the actions of multinational companies, and saw them as the only beneficiaries. Some submitters wanted New Zealand to push for greater self-sufficiency as a way of breaking away from the control of these multinationals. There was some confusion on the issue however, as many submitters who identified globalisation as explicitly a bad thing, also viewed it implicitly as a good thing in that they wanted New Zealand to be able to sell its non-genetic modification products to the rest of the world.

Biotechnology revolution

Although a small number of public submitters were excited about the possibilities of the biotechnological revolution, more often they expressed concern. For instance, some submitters expressed abhorrence of genomics, often seeing it as ethically dubious, driven by short-term commercial interest, and risky. A few instead preferred to see New Zealand avoid this technology, concentrating instead on “more natural” research related to organic production.

Consumer responses to genetic modification

Public submitters identified consumer-related overseas developments that could affect how New Zealand addresses genetic modification. These developments, which are not necessarily mutually consistent included:

- consumer concern about genetic modification, especially for food products

- consumer demand for “clean, green”, “safe” and “natural” products
- decreasing demand for genetic modification-free products
- increasing demand for organic.

Submitters viewed these trends as, together, signalling the need for New Zealand to reject genetic modification and embrace organic production.

Legal and policy responses to genetic modification

Some public submitters were concerned about the lack of public input into Government’s negotiation of trade and other agreements with international partners. They were also concerned about the degree to which these agreements could influence the way New Zealand made decisions about genetic modification. They saw any international pressure on New Zealand as a sovereignty issue and an unacceptable challenge to national self-determination. Thus, public submitters considered that international agreements needed to be renegotiated, so that they reflect public views about genetic modification. Also, rather than ensuring that New Zealand’s legislative and regulatory framework is consistent with international frameworks, they were more likely to argue for New Zealand’s taking a maverick position as the country has in other ethical matters, such as in nuclear matters. Thus, they saw some value in New Zealand clearly standing out from other countries.