

PURE HAWKE'S BAY

9 March 2011

Mayor Lawrence Yule
Hastings District Council

Dear Lawrence:

We appreciate the time you spent with us last week to discuss the issue of GMO's and their possible introduction into Hawke's Bay. We are pleased that you agree discussion on the topic is "worthwhile and timely", and that you have pledged to advance this dialogue.

As we indicated, our group, Pure Hawke's Bay, represents a community of Hawke's Bay growers and producers who see the Bay's future as a world-renowned producer of premium, GE-free food. Branding the Bay in that way – and delivering on that promise – should be a central plank in our region's economic development strategy, we believe.

Within that context, our great concern is the risk that GMOs could be introduced to the region. We feel that this would have devastating consequences for the region's premium food exporters by damaging the Bay's brand in international markets, compromising the sustainability objectives of our group, and withdrawing an excellent marketing opportunity. Moreover, if field use of GMO's resulted in contamination of other crops (which we believe would be inevitable), damage would be irreversible.

New Zealand has a legacy of foolish past introductions - silver bullets are nearly always lead in disguise. Our concerns in this issue are concrete.

In the face of this threat Pure Hawke's Bay believes that ERMA, the responsible national agency, is taking far too permissive a stance on the GMO applications it has already received – 20 applications since 1999, 20 approvals. Field trial breaches are common and create local authority liabilities for clean up. While Hastings and other Bay councils could submit against such applications, this approach would be extremely burdensome on a case-by-case basis. In any event, ERMA is not required to consider local interests.

We believe Hawke's Bay needs to draw its own line in the sand to protect our local agriculture, our current desire for real sustainability and our established brand.

Consequently, we request that the councils in the region (starting with HDC and the Regional Council) take a precautionary approach and agree to preserve Hawke's Bay's GM Free status for the next ten years.

We urge you to secure this through the Hastings District Plan, now being revised ... and we will urge the Regional Council to do the same in its Regional Policy Statement.

As we discussed, and you agree, local authorities are clearly empowered to take such action.

We expect that over the next few years the risks of GMO use will become even more clearly understood, the lack of benefits established, and public resistance – most especially in our overseas food markets – will intensify. New Zealand, with Hawke's Bay in the vanguard, must differentiate itself by preserving its status as a GM-Free food producer.

Accordingly, we will formally submit during the Hastings District Plan revision process, recommending restrictions on the out-of-laboratory use of GMOs, and we will recommend the same with respect to the HBRC's Regional Policy Statement revision.

Further, we will submit to HDC's 2011-2012 budget consultation with respect to ensuring funds are available to performing any Section 32 analysis required (under the RMA) to justify local/regional regulation. As we indicated, substantial research in this regard has already been undertaken by Northland councils, which HDC staff can readily access.

Pure Hawke's Bay invites you and the Hastings Council to play a leadership role in establishing this policy in Hawke's Bay. Given the importance of Hawke's Bay agriculture to New Zealand's international profile and exports, HDC's leadership in this matter would have national significance.

Thank you for assisting Pure Hawke's Bay in moving our concerns and proposal onto the HDC agenda.

Sincerely,

On behalf of Pure Hawke's Bay

John Bostock

Scott Lawson

Will MacFarlane

