

To: The GMO Moratorium Review

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From: Kerin Booth

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this review. Tasmania is in a unique position to benefit from the continuation of its GMO Moratorium. The protection of Tasmania's GMO-free status should be continued. Without a continuing GMO Moratorium our Tasmania Brand would be negatively affected and demand for Tasmanian agricultural-based products could plummet, along with our tourism and hospitality industries. Being involved in tourism myself, I am very aware of Tasmania's Clean Green GMO-free status in attracting tourists here.

Tasmania's international popularity as a destination worth travelling to, has only just begun to boom. While there are available statistics on international visitor numbers to Tasmania and the growing numbers of visitors eating out at restaurants, participating in nature-based activities and farm-gate visits, we have no statistics available on whether our Clean GMO-free brand currently contributes to travel destination decisions or if will affect decisions in the future by the fast-growing middle-class Chinese, for example, in choosing Tasmania as their preferred travel destination. However, what we do know, is that Tasmania's reputation for clean high-quality genetically engineered-free food and wine is world renowned.

Social media rapidly circulates health and food information, and so there is already wide-spread consumer concern about GMOs, certainly throughout Europe but also a very cautious approach to GMOs in Asia. The European Commission, on its European Green Capital website, says *'Nineteen out of the 28 member state countries of the European Union have voted to either partially or fully ban Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).'* In China, a nation-wide consumer study, found most participants had a negative perception of GMOs. Furthermore, *'the initial positive attitude towards GM food in 2002 generally decreased in subsequent years.'* See

*'Public perception of genetically-modified (GM) food: A Nationwide Chinese Consumer Study'* by Kai Cui & Sharon P. Shoemaker in *NPJ Science of Food*, volume 2, Article number: 10 (2018), located at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41538-018-0018-4>

Many companies benefit from labelling their products GMO-free and a consumer preference for GMO-free products appears to be growing. It would be highly probable that news would quickly be generated and widely circulated, if Tasmania was to lose its GMO-free status. This would not only affect markets for our high-value, high-quality GMO-free agricultural produce, it may well affect tourism and hospitality and other industries.

I am concerned that certain sectors of the Agricultural Industry, such as the Poppy Industry, and some but not all Canola Growers will be powerful lobbyists in this GMO Moratorium review process. No doubt they will claim that their industries will benefit immensely from being allowed to grow GM crops. However, the range of genetic modification 'traits available commercially remains relatively small and dominated by herbicide tolerance and insect resistance traits' according to the Tasmanian Gene Technology Policy (2014 – 2019).

Other methods of weed-control such as crop rotation and botanical and biological pest management may have not yet been sufficiently trialed in Tasmania, despite the possibility that Agro-ecology may well be the key to higher crop production levels while not contaminating our Tasmania Brand for all other farm products and leaving it irrevocably damaged.

The over-supply of opioids on the world market and the move by Australia to reschedule codeine-based products, in line with the USA, Japan and European countries, making these drugs only available by prescription, may well see a downturn in the poppy industry in Tasmania, competing in the global market. So why would we allow GM poppy crops to contaminate our GMO-free status, especially if there is no secure prediction for a sustainable global market for Tasmanian Opioid products. There is also the prospect of medicinal cannabis taking a share of the opioid market. Tasmania would be in a unique position to grow Natural GMO-free Medicinal Cannabis, which would be grown mostly indoors with more efficient management of pests, weeds and climate. Therefore, growing Natural GMO-free Medicinal Cannabis commercially should be highly achievable and would undoubtedly demand a premium on world markets if we maintain our statewide GMO-free status.

Considering the opportunities for a range of Tasmanian industries if we continue the GMO Moratorium and the highly probable negative impact if we lose this status, it is clear that the GMO Moratorium should continue and a permanent GMO ban should be considered.