

**Subject:** TAPG GMO Review Response  
**Date:** Friday, 26 April 2019 10:29:53 AM

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## **Introduction**

TAPG directly represents the industry processing and related agri-business service providers. It is registered with ASIC as a not for profit company and is governed by an elected Board who volunteer their service. The Articles of Association require that members of the Board represent the various sectors that comprise the overall agricultural industry. This requirement ensures that the Board consistently takes a “whole of supply chain” approach when considering the matters before it.

Accordingly the composition of the Board requires Directors as follows:

- Vegetable Processing (2)
- Plantation Forestry
- "Other" Crop Processing
- Education & Training
- Fresh Vegetables
- Other (Business Development)
- Discretionary (Regulatory Affairs)
- Agribusiness Services
- Dairy Processing
- Tasmanian Women in Agriculture
- Primary Production
- Transport & Logistics

No other representative group in Tasmania attempts to maintain this breadth of view when considering policy and practice in the agricultural environment.

Current representation within these categories ranges from large multi-national companies through wholly Tasmanian companies to individual farming business owners. All Directors are required to represent their “sector” rather than the specific interests/policies of the company for whom they work.

This elaboration of the governance structure for the reader is important in understanding the breadth, quality and overall neutrality of consideration that the Board have provided when discussing the issue of GMO in the Tasmanian context.

### **Broad Response Summary:**

- TAPG believes that the current level of consumer acceptance and therefore the demand for GM food products is limited. We need to monitor developments in this regard and review our position should this market position change. There appears to be no current market

advantage to Tasmania in moving to GM food products. Equally, there appears to be little substantive evidence of market advantage flowing as a result of the current moratorium. It is acknowledged that a move away from our present position could be harmful to our current status as a producer of quality clean green products.

➤ Tasmania needs to maintain and build on its "Brand". The use of gene technology in food areas must not threaten this position even if it can be shown to be merely a market "perception" rather than a reality.

➤ There are opportunities for GM Technology to provide productivity improvements for Tasmanian agricultural commodities and Tasmania must be able to take advantage of such developments. Research and trials in non food crops should be allowed to proceed under the direction of the appropriate regulator.

➤ TAPG encourages an objective scientific debate on the merits and impacts of GM Technology. The scientific evidence on the issue needs to be fully understood and presented to the community to allow public understanding of the issues to improve so that a more informed debate can take place. Major reviews in other Australian jurisdictions have been completed and their findings need to be considered in the light of the Tasmanian context.

➤ A certain level of flexibility is required to ensure that Tasmania industries remain competitive should the uptake of gene technology become more commercially attractive to companies.

➤ Research trials should be allowed under a strict environment that does not threaten the state's agricultural economy.

**Specific Recommendations:** (Consistent with previous submissions)

➤ **Pharmaceutical crops should be exempt from any future moratorium.** The Board has received advice that, under the existing moratorium, poppy crops could be planted that contained GM seed. Poppy industry representatives have maintained that the procedures around these exemption provisions were ambiguous at best and did not allow the companies involved to undertake these plantings without fear of adverse reaction from various quarters. A clear cut and public exemption from any future moratorium would allow this critical

crop in Tasmania to both maintain and improve its position as a world leading cultivation. A further benefit to be derived from such an exemption would be to better cement Tasmania's place as the preferred poppy growing location within Australia and New Zealand given that all possible variants of this crop could be planted as required by the industry. The economic value of this critical crop to the over-all success of the Irrigation Scheme initiatives cannot be over-emphasised. The Board also believe that the public perception of "pharmaceutical products" acknowledges the "manufactured" nature of most pain relief and subsequent acceptance of this fact.

➤ **Consideration of exemption should be given to other non-food crops.** The Board heard evidence that the competitiveness of Tasmanian milk production will almost certainly be negatively impacted by Tasmanian dairy farmer's inability to grow improved pasture species or grains. At a time when a concerted campaign to "Fill the Factories" is being conducted the lack of access to dramatically improved feed will undoubtedly restrict the ability of the Dairy Industry to meet forecast milk demand. Tasmanian milk producers will be placed at a competitive disadvantage to mainland producers who will have access to seed approved by the Gene Technology Regulator. It is worth noting that very little of this industry's product is "badged" as Tasmanian in its final market form.

**Additional Note: (Forestry Specific)**

Quote from Member Company response that received wider support from other companies:

"From a scientific viewpoint, (Name withheld) sees some significant opportunities in the use of GMO technology for improved plantation productivity and also lower environmental footprint. Some practical examples could include plantations less susceptible to browsing from vertebrate and invertebrate pests, herbicide resistance, improved water and fertiliser use efficiency and perhaps also sterile plants (i.e. no wilding regeneration). Down the track there may also be an opportunity to capture hybrid vigour which is currently not part of our breeding programs.

That said, (Company name) is also certified to some world leading environmental certification schemes that strictly prohibits the use of GMO technology in our operations. At this time we place a significantly higher value on the certification scheme accreditation and general social licence than the exploration of GMO technology. So, in short, we voluntarily withdraw from the use of GMO technology irrespective of the Tasmanian Government's moratorium."

TAPG looks forward to being actively involved in consultations where these matters will be vigorously discussed along with a full range of related matters.

Kind regards

Terry



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