

Open letter from scientists and doctors around the world regarding human feeding trials of genetically modified wheat in Australia

Dear Dr. Megan Clark, Chief Executive CSIRO,

We are writing to express our unequivocal denunciation of the experiments being conducted by your colleagues that involve feeding genetically modified (GM) wheat to human subjects. We are all senior scientists/academics with a professional interest in the health and environmental effects of GMOs. We refer to the trials described on the website of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR):

- DIR 093 - Limited and controlled release of wheat and barley genetically modified for altered grain starch composition

The biological and biochemical characterisation of the GM wheat being used in these experiments is inadequately described in the publicly available literature. Much of the information required to conduct adequate pre-clinical evaluation is withheld on the basis that it is 'confidential commercial information'.

Genetically modified products have not been shown to be distinctive, uniform and stable over time. There is a large body of evidence that shows that GM crop / food production is highly prone to inadvertent and unpredictable pleiotropic effects, which can result in health damaging effects when GM food products are fed to animals (Pusztai and Bardocz, 2006; Schubert, 2008; Dona and Arvanitoyannis, 2009).

The feeding trials, as described in the documents from the OGTR, are completely inadequate to assess these risks. Feeding trials on rats, pigs and humans are proposed for a period of 1 to 28 days. The intention of these trials is to assess the altered grain starch composition of the wheat, but not to test for any unintended results. We have seen in the independent research conducted on consumption of GM plants to date that unintended effects may appear in later generations (Velimirov et al, 2008).

The use of human subjects for these GM feeding experiments is completely unacceptable. The experiments may be used to dispense with concerns about the health impacts of consuming GM plants, but will not in fact, address the health risks GM plants raise.

The feeding trials should not be conducted until long-term impact assessments have been undertaken and appropriate information released to enable the scientific community to determine the value of such research, as against the risks.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned signatories:

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