



For the first time, genetically modified (GM) food crops will be grown in Australia. From May 2008 in New South Wales and Victoria, GM canola will be grown commercially and will enter our food supply.

As chefs and restaurateurs we aim to protect the quality, diversity and the flavour of food we serve. To do so we need to be positive that what we put on plates represents the best Australia has to offer. To do otherwise is to risk not only the well being of our clientele, but also the well being of our nation.

Because of the untested long-term risks associated with the growing and consumption of GM foods, we are strongly opposed to serving them - or ingredients derived from GM products - in our restaurants.

Statistics reveal that the majority of Australians do not want to eat GM foods and over recent years we have seen our customers' growing concern about the origins, ethical treatment and corporate control of food.

Canola is used in an extensive number of food products, ranging from breakfast cereals to oil and margarine to bread. Once GM canola is grown on Australian soil, it will find its way into our diet as canola oil and meal. Even worse, we will not know that we are eating food that contains GM canola, because under current laws it will remain unlabelled.

In the US and the EU, and across the world the great growth area is in clean, green food products. We believe that it is not wise to give up our global, unrestricted GM free marketing advantage, particularly when the long term implications of GM food manufacture and consumption are not yet known.

Only two state governments, New South Wales and Victoria, have lifted their moratoria on growing GM canola - all other canola growing states have committed to maintaining their moratoria on environmental, health and economic grounds. We encourage the New South Wales and Victorian governments to join the other states and reverse their position for the benefit of the nation.

In the meantime, it is imperative that the Federal Government legislates for the labelling of all GM foods and food products derived through GM. This is essential so that Australians can make clear decisions about whether to buy GM free ingredients or not. The labelling should include all vegetable oils, starches, sugars, colourings, produce made with canola, processing aids and additives, as well as animal feed. It should also include the labelling of meat from animals that have eaten GM feed.

We are committed to Australia's GM free status so GM free food can be prepared and enjoyed without hesitation across the country, by all Australians.

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