



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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30 January 2002

S02.01

**Submission on Hazardous Substances and New Organisms
(Genetically Modified Organisms) Amendment Bill**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 43 nationally organised societies. It has 35 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated.

This submission is written on behalf of the Environment Standing Committee, from responses from the members of that committee.

Introduction

NCWNZ is pleased to be able to comment on this Bill as it is a topic in which members take a great interest, and it is regrettable that the timing of the consultation over the summer break has not enabled the wider NCWNZ membership to comment. NCWNZ supports the overall tenor of the Bill and regards it as a cautious and sensible approach to what has become a highly emotive topic. It provides a way forward that gives time for careful consideration of future directions.

Specific Comment

Part 1

Preliminary provisions

NCWNZ supports the proposed two-year moratorium on the release of new imported organisms and genetically modified organisms as part of the precautionary approach needed in controlling any organism with unknown effects on the environment. New Zealand has many examples of pest species whose effects on the environment were not known fully before release.

Part 2

Release and field testing of genetically modified organisms

NCWNZ agrees with a more rigorous set of criteria for field trial applications. The secure containment or destruction of genetically modified organisms after a trial is of critical importance so that any genetically modified organism cannot persist viably in the outside environment. This needs to be monitored closely to ensure that the containment is under maximum security or the destruction complete.

NCWNZ considers that there is some justification for exceptions to release for certain medicines as long as this is carried out in carefully controlled conditions that have been specified and approved in advance under Environmental Risk Management Authority regulations. Such applications are highly experimental and the effects of treatment should be monitored closely to provide guidelines for further research, not just for the response from the patient but also for the effects on the environment of any genetically modified material passed in waste. NCWNZ is in full support of





what is expressed the 6th bullet point paragraph on p7 of the explanatory notes, requiring the inclusion of additional information to show that the GMO is safe.

NCWNZ regards it as important that considerations of human health and safety be included in the public policy objectives (p4, explanatory notes) along with those pertaining to the environment and the economy. Of these areas the returns to investors and commercial competitiveness should be subservient to the need to protect the environment and indigenous species, and to safeguard health.

General Comment

NCWNZ commends this Bill for the steps taken towards alleviating fears of the public. It will enable further investigation of the implications of this technology in a more reasoned atmosphere. However, the positive aspects will only continue as long as all the provisions of the Bill are strictly enforced. The conditions on applications need to be seen as watertight and the Environmental Risk Management Authority must build up a climate of trust in the integrity of their decisions so that it is recognised as serving the interests of the people of New Zealand.

Barbara Glenie
National President

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Convener, Environment Standing Committee