



*"safe food - good food"*

MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **NEW GM CROPS APPROVED WITHOUT TESTING FOR POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO HUMAN GENES**

Food safety campaigners say Australians should be alarmed by research just published in the international journal *Environment International* showing that regulators are making untested assumptions about the safety of new GM crops that could affect the genes of humans that consume them.

The paper, "A comparative assessment of the regulation of GM crops or products containing dsRNA and suggested regulatory improvements", by researchers in New Zealand, Australia and Brazil, is available free at <http://bit.ly/14i7pyG> courtesy of The Safe Food Foundation.

It shows that food regulators have not tested the effect on humans of double-stranded RNA molecules which kill insects which eat them by altering genes that stop them absorbing nutrition.

Scott Kinnear from the Safe Food Foundation says it is frightening, and unacceptable, that the local regulator -- Food Standards Australia New Zealand -- has not tested the hypothesis that dsRNA may affect the genes of humans that consume the new GM crops which contain it.

"Despite failing to check the safety or otherwise of these new GM molecules, regulators such as FSANZ are approving the GM material for human consumption in foods such as margarines, mayonnaises, chocolate and miso.

"FSANZ has approved at least five GM products containing dsRNA despite the scientific uncertainty over their affect on humans.

"FSANZ prefers to assume that dsRNA is not transmitted to humans through food, and would be unstable in cooking or during digestion.

"According to the lead author of the new paper, Prof Jack Heinemann from NZ's University of Canterbury, new research shows dsRNA can survive cooking and digestion, and can therefore be absorbed into the bodies of people who eat plants containing the molecules, potentially "turning off" human genes.

"Why wait years until millions of people have consumed these products to see what their effect is?"

GM plants designed to make a new RNA (ribonucleic acid) molecule, which is either double-stranded (dsRNA) or with the ability to create one, include Australian barley and wheat varieties currently being tested to change the type of starch they produce.

The Safe Food Foundation commissioned Professor Heinemann and Dr Carman to assess the risks associated with CSIRO's high amylase GM wheat. Their work, published on our website, found that there is a risk, untested by CSIRO, that the double stranded RNA in the wheat could suppress the production of glycogen in the people who eat the wheat. This could have devastating consequences causing serious illness or death.

### **For more information**

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The Safe Food Foundation is an Australian based not-for-profit campaign and advocacy organisation with a broad remit and a proactive, solution oriented approach to food quality and safety. The Safe Food Foundation's mission is to make the world's food supply clean, safe, nutritious, full of taste and produced in a way that enhances our environment, as well as our social and economic systems. We work to highlight issues around Genetically Modified (GM) foods, chemicals, nanotechnology, irradiation, corporate control, monoculture, fair trade and food sovereignty.