



Senate Standing Committees on Economics
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By email: economics.sen@aph.gov.au

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Submission to Senate Standing Committees on Economics

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a collaboration of organisations and individuals working together towards a food system in which people have the opportunity to choose, create and manage their food supply from paddock to plate. AFSA is an independent organization and is not aligned with any political party. Currently we have 120 individual, organisational, business and farmer members. These members include national networks such as the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network, peak bodies such as the Melbourne Farmers Markets Association and the Victorian Local Governance Association, the City of Melbourne, and leading environment organisations such as Humane Choice, MADGE and Gene Ethics. We are a part of a robust global network of farmer-led organisations involved in food security and food sovereignty policy development and advocacy. Our involvement includes being the sole Australasian representative on the Civil Society Mechanism of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Committee on World Food Security, as well as being the sole Australian representative on the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. We are also linked to Slow Food International.

We work extensively with primary food producers and consumers across every state and territory in Australia. Our committee consists of published academics and lecturers from RMIT, Deakin University, University of Tasmania, and the Queensland University of Technology, farmers from NSW, VIC, ACT and WA, and local advocates and campaigners representing Food Connect, Friends of the Earth, Fair Food Brisbane and the Permaculture Network. Our vice president is also convenor of the Australasian Agri food Research Network.

Below are our comments on the current food certification schemes.

GM labelling

Research concerning the safety of food derived from or containing GMOs is ambiguous and consumers have a right to know when GM products have gone into the food they are consuming so they can make an informed choice.

At the moment the GM labelling requirements in Australia and New Zealand are inadequate as GM labelling is only required if the GM foods, ingredients, additives, or processing aids, by comparing with a conventionally grown counterpart, is found to contain novel DNA.



We argue that the novelty of gene technology as a means to alter food for human consumption, and the fact that it has not been around for long enough to rule out all effects that could be adverse to human health, justifies the necessity of labelling all products containing any GMO.

Free range labelling

The current free range labelling standards are set too low which is misleading for consumers. The term 'free range' suggests high animal welfare, but often stocking densities are still very high (29% of free range egg production in Australia is currently running at more than 20,000 hens per hectare). Current free range labelling do not require paddock rotation to ensure continual vegetation growth, soil regeneration or any other agroecological measure. Consumers should not be expected to be experts in labelling and they should be able to trust the labels that they see on food to accurately represent the contents and the way in which it was produced.

In conclusion, democracy and transparency in food systems are paramount to health and safety. People have the right to know what they consume so they can make an informed choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tammi Jonas".

Tammi Jonas
President
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance