

**The Project Team - Review of the moratorium on GMOs in Tasmania
(2013) Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and
Environment
GPO Box 44, Hobart TAS 7001**

**Brand Tasmania Council Inc. submission to the Tasmanian Government review into
the GMO Moratorium**

In developing this submission the Brand Tasmania Council consulted widely within the stakeholder group that is involved in food and beverage based agriculture and hospitality.

We considered the hospitality industry a key influencer in the perception of the Tasmanian Brand values. All the Brand Council's previous research has strongly indicated food and beverage is a key driver of the Tasmanian Brand values.

In July 2000 as part of a Newspoll Omnibus survey, the Brand Council and the Tasmanian Food Council jointly polled residents in Sydney and Melbourne regarding their impressions of Tasmanian food; and the effect that the production of genetically modified food in Tasmania would have on their views of Tasmanian food generally.

Fifty-five percent of respondents said it would make no difference to their view of Tasmanian food, 38.3 per cent said it would make them feel less positive towards Tasmanian food.

Generally, those who would regard GM food negatively were more likely to be older (35+) and more educated. This demographic is similar to that of the higher value visitor to Tasmania.

Those who said it would make no difference were more likely to be younger (18-34) and less educated.

Unfortunately the Brand Tasmania Council was not able to commit to a wide research exercise in considering its response to this review of the GMO Moratorium due to budget constraints.

However the issue is still considered a very important issue for the ongoing health of the Tasmanian brand.

The following is a desktop review of discussions held with leaders in the hospitality industry and leading food and beverage producers many who are also major exporters.

Since the Brand Council's original recommendation in 2000:

".....the Brand Tasmania Council finds the potential of GM food production in Tasmania would have an adverse effect on the Tasmanian brand and as such the Council recommends that the precautionary principle should apply."

Since the Brand Council's submission to the Review in 2009 to support the retention of the GMO ban, the Tasmanian tourism experience has developed to a much more sophisticated model.

The leaders in the hospitality industry confirmed this increased sophistication.

"We opened Garagistes six months before MONA opened and the profile of our guests has changed dramatically since our first 6 months. Now guests are travelling for the MONA experience and they are also travelling to eat. The restaurant experience is an important part of the Tasmanian experience. With this change the customers' knowledge and expectation of quality food has increased as well." **Luke Burgess Head Chef Garagistes.**

"People Travel to eat now. Our guests have a very high expectation. The Tasmanian natural and pure image is a given for many of our guests." **Andre Kropp, The Henry Jones Art Hotel.**

When asked to comment directly on the likely affect that a lift of the GMO ban could have for the hospitality industry the message had a common theme.

We can confirm a very strong trend to local and more natural methods of growing, and rearing food. There is also a trend of bringing back heritage and traditional breeds. Customers want natural, fresh and local.

An introduction of GMO into Tasmanian agriculture in any form would compromise the Stillwater and Black Cow offer, and the Tasmanian tourism experience. Our offer is based on quality food and beverage. A change to allow GMO would also seriously compromise the Tasmanian brand and the total Tasmanian food distribution chain. **Kim Seagram, Proprietor Stillwater and Black Cow restaurants, Launceston**

Our promise to our customers is our dedication to fresh, local and organic produce.

The first thing our visitors comment on is the depth of flavour achieved through our partnership with producers. You can only hold to such a fundamental commitment between producers and chefs, and in turn diners, while there is integrity in the values of the Tasmanian food brand.

If the moratorium on GMO in Tasmania was to be lifted the damage to the Tasmanian food brand and the hospitality industry would be incalculable. There would be considerably diminished trust in the values of the Tasmanian Brand. **Luke Burgess, Head Chef and Co-proprietor, Garagistes, Murray Street Hobart.**

At The Source our mantra is pure, fresh and Tasmanian. Our customers travel from all over the world to enjoy the MONA experience. We find they arrive with a perception that Tasmanian food is as pure and as fresh as is possible. Our customers trust the Tasmanian food and beverage brand. We value-add to the fresh and pure with our creativity to ensure we enhance the visitors' experience.

The integrity of the brand would be destroyed if there were any relaxation of the current GMO moratorium. The effect would not only be disastrous for the food and beverage producers but also for those involved in Tasmania's hospitality industry. **Philippe Leban, Head Chef, The Source, Berridale.**

Tasmania has a reputation for some of the best food offering in the world. We search throughout Tasmanian for ingredients that allow us to position our award-winning strongly Tasmanian sourced menu as a strong point of difference in a tough market. The ban on GMOs is one of the planks of that reputation. We use Tasmanian food because our customers appreciate the natural and fresh flavours. If GMOs were allowed our whole Brand would be contaminated. **Phillip Kennedy, Proprietor Pure South Restaurant, Melbourne.**

We have just invested around one and a half million dollars in expanding our business. We will spend another half a million in marketing it. Our new upmarket tourism experience is totally linked to Tasmania's unique environment and its world class fresh and natural food. The introduction of any GMO into our pristine food offer would threaten the credibility of our product and could threaten the viability of our new venture. **Rob Pennicott, Managing Director, Pennicott Wilderness Tours**

I think of Tasmania as beyond organic. I promote Tasmanian food and beverage around the world as natural and pure.

It would be beyond comprehension that any GMO could be allowed to contaminate this pristine, ideal for high quality cool climate agriculture, environment. **Tetsuya Wakuda Head Chef and proprietor Tetsuya's Sydney, Waku Ghin Singapore**

Our guests are sophisticated travellers and they arrive at the Henry Jones Art Hotel with a perception that Tasmania's food and beverage offering is based on pure and natural.

Many are educated food travellers who travel to eat. They have a rightful expectation that what they order at the Henry Jones Art Hotel is pure, natural and local. It is for this reason that the GMO moratorium in Tasmania must remain in place. Any change would be a disastrous for the Tasmanian food brand. **Andre Kropp, Executive Chef, The Henry Jones Art Hotel, Hobart**

Our customers are fifty percent local fifty percent visitors. They continually remark positively on the quality of our product.

There is a trust that exists between Daci and Daci and our customers that we would only use the very best and purest of local ingredients.

*We invested here in Tasmania because of the purity of the natural product, any change to the GMO moratorium and we would feel violated. We would also feel we would be deceiving our customers. **Naser and Cheryl Daci, Daci & Daci Patisserie, Murray Street, Hobart***

The Brand Tasmania Council also felt obliged to consult food and beverage commentators and influencers and organisations dedicated to improving community health.

Look at the world today, the top ends – as opposed to the mass ends - of the food, wine and restaurant industries. They are being increasingly driven by consumer demand for products and production methods that are variously sustainable, humane, organic, biodynamic, natural, clean/green, the locavore, paddock-to-plate and farmer market movements and general consumer concerns about a product's origin and provenance.

Tasmania generally ticks all these boxes and our carefully built clean/green Tasmanian Brand values have been the basis for much of our tourism, food and wine successes. They underpin the national acclaim won by our cheeses, honey, beef, fruits and other specialty food producers, restaurants like Garagistes, The Stackings, The Source, Ethos, Stillwater. Black Cow, the Agrarian Kitchen, TV's The Gourmet Farmer, our wines, even our spring waters and whiskies with their GM-free barley, natural water and highland peat.

*I firmly believe any, even the slightest movement towards allowing GMOs would severely undermine the Tasmanian Brand. GMOs would damage our current and future competitive advantage and our point of difference in the market. **Graeme Phillips, Food and Wine writer, Mount Nelson***

It is vital to retain the GM moratorium in Tasmania. Along with protecting the Tasmanian Brand and our niche food industries it is vital to sustain the Tasmanian clean pure food image.

Eat Well Tasmania is concerned that a lift in the ban of GMO in agriculture has the potential to negatively impact the communities' view of healthy and tasty fruit and vegetables at a local level.

Despite Tasmania growing prime, clean fresh produce, Tasmanians as a majority do not consume the recommended daily intake of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Removing the moratorium has the ability not only to damage the Tasmanian Brand, but also has the potential to undermine past and current work being undertaken around the benefits of eating healthy and locally and lead to a decrease in

Tasmanians' consumption of fresh local produce. **Nenita Orsino, Executive Officer, Eat Well Tasmania, Hobart**

The Brand Tasmania Council also consulted widely among its partners in the food and beverage sector of the Tasmanian economy.

Hammond Farms produce unique grass fed Wagyu beef from our properties on the far northwest coast of Tasmania and from our off-shore islands of Robbins and Walker Islands. Our cattle are sold as high value prime meat cuts into top end restaurants in Tasmania, Melbourne, Sydney and Singapore.

The quality and uniqueness of our product is enhanced by the extraordinary high trust our customers have in the Tasmanian food brand. We rely on the maintenance of those brand values and fear a lift in the GMO moratorium would massively damage the Tasmanian food brand and our all markets. **John Hammond, Director Hammond Farms Wagyu Beef Producers, Montague**

Our company is located in Smithton and we operate one of Tasmania's three main abattoirs. We developed the "Cape Grim" brand of beef that supplies high value prime cuts of beef to many of the leading restaurants and hotels throughout Australia and internationally.

Strong emphasis is placed on the product being GMO free. This is a point of difference for the marketing of our product.

This point of difference has been one of our major selling points. The feedback we get from our overseas customers consistently says that Tasmania being GMO free is the point of difference that sets our beef apart from that of our competitors. **Peter Greenham, Managing Director, Greenham Tasmania, Smithton**

Tasmania trades on its clean green image, and the more proactive marketers are taking advantage of this by utilising all the points of difference to gain market access and to advertise to consumers the unique qualities of the State's produce.

Collectively we need to keep building on this and encourage those that take it for granted to empower themselves by using Tasmania's attributes to market their product.

We need to protect these unique points of difference. Acting strategically by maintaining the GMO moratorium is a sound and necessary decision for the longer term that will provide benefits to the economy, environment and the Tasmanian people. **Brett Hall, BC & RL Hall Partnership, Beef Farmer and TFGA Meat Councillor. Oatlands**

Tasmania has to survive in the small niche market high value area of agriculture and must always differentiate on its point of difference. Allowing GMO in agriculture

could crucify **our** Tasmanian Brand and our market appeal. **David Byard, CEO Australian Beef Association, Launceston**

Tasmania's point of difference in food production is the perception of fresh and natural. They are the key values that we have used to market our fish in Australia and overseas, particularly Japan. Lifting the GMO moratorium would contaminate that market perception. **Frances Bender, Co-Owner and Director, Huon Aquaculture Hideaway Bay, Dover**

For us the GMO moratorium is about market access. We export around fifty thousand tonnes of onions to Europe each year. These onions are grown on about fifty farms across northern Tasmania. To have access to the European market we have to guarantee the Field Fresh products are free of GMO. Lifting the GMO moratorium would close the European market to our onions.

Over the last few years we have worked to develop an agriculture business based on supplying high quality fresh seasonal fruit vegetables and herbs to high-end restaurants in Tasmania and interstate.

I was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship in 2012 and I travelled extensively in North America and Europe and in particular studied innovative vegetable production in niche plants and also looked at the acceptance or non- acceptance of GMO plants in the food chain.

My conclusion is that there is nothing to gain from Tasmania allowing the introduction of GMO plants and everything to lose.

Tasmania's niche in food and beverage and hospitality is based on the perception and fact that Tasmania's food and beverage is pure, fresh and natural. The market is certainly not ready for GMO foods and the introduction of any GMO into Tasmanian agriculture would destroy forever the unique market advantage that Tasmania currently has.

It is far too great a risk at this stage to contemplate any change from the current total ban on GMO. **Richard Birtill, Production Manager Field Fresh, Forth**

Prior to establishing Lubiana Wines at Granton in Tasmania we spent time researching ideal locations for cool climate high value wine production across southern Australia. We settled on Tasmania because of its ideal climatic conditions and the relatively clean and natural environment.

We have spent over five million dollars developing a vineyard that produces wonderful grapes and we add our expertise in the production process to produce high quality wine that is exported to many regions around the world.

The perception in the national and international market is that Tasmania is one of the purest and most pristine of regions in the world. This is a quite unique market advantage for all of Tasmania's food and beverage producers.

*This unique marketing advantage would be destroyed if there were to be any relaxation of the current GMO moratorium. **Stefano Lubiana, Managing Director Lubiana Wines, Granton Tasmania***

*Tasmania is differentiated by its purity. This differentiation will become an even greater commercial advantage as other jurisdictions allow GMO and lose customer trust with their food and beverage offering. **Tony Shearer Frogmore Wines, Cambridge***

We have built a high value low volume quality cheese business based on Bruny Island. We sell quality cheese to customers through an online ordering and distribution system across Australia. Our customers are attracted to our product because of the quality of our product and Tasmania's reputation for natural and fresh.

*The introduction of GMO would destroy our market positioning and our market advantage. It would seriously threaten the viability of our business. **Nick Haddow, Managing Director Bruny Island Cheese, Hobart***

We have spent the last decade developing an export market in South East and North Asia in some of the most discerning food markets on the planet.

We have been able to get critical market access because of the extraordinary perception that these markets have of the Tasmanian food and beverage brand. Any introduction of GMO plants into Tasmania would destroy our markets in these regions.

*We have just gained market access in China and the total market opportunity there is due to Tasmania's pure island image and reputation. **Tim Reid, Managing Director Reid Fruits, Plenty Tasmania***

In South East and North Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America customers pay a premium for our Tasmanian honey.

These customers seek out our Tasmanian product because they trust its purity and natural values and they love the taste. These values have underpinned our Tasmanian honey story for decades.

*If GMO plants were allowed into Tasmania's agriculture mix our honey and Tasmania's reputation for natural and pure would be permanently contaminated. **Lindsay Bourke Chairman Tasmanian Beekeepers Association***

The Brand Tasmania Council's research into the food and beverage and hospitality sectors considerations on the Review of the GMO moratorium conclude:

that the potential of any use of GMO products in Tasmania would have an adverse effect on the Tasmanian Brand and as such the Brand Tasmania Council would recommend that the precautionary principle should apply. The GMO moratorium should continue.

Brand Tasmania Council Inc.
PO Box 957
Sandy Bay TAS 7005