

# Consumers aren't concerned about GM

**M**ost European consumers are not concerned about buying GM foods, according to a new European Commission funded study 'Do European consumers buy GM foods?'

Under EU regulations, food is required to be labelled as GM when more than 0.9 per cent of any ingredient is genetically modified. The EC study followed the introduction of labelled GM ingredients into the EU market and is the first to compare purchasing behaviours using questionnaires as well as focus group responses. The study found that most people do not actively avoid GM food and that questionnaires are not an accurate measure of real-life purchasing behaviour.

When food was discussed with focus groups, the use of GM ingredients was not a major consideration influencing purchasing decisions. Factors such as quality and freshness, value for money and familiarity with the product were much more important.

The study concluded that Europeans will consume GM foods when they are offered the opportunity to do so.

CropLife Australia CEO Paula Mat-

thewson said this European data supports the results of recent consumer surveys conducted in Australia which have found that many consumers do not care whether food contains GM ingredients or not.

"This European report also discredits claims that there is market resistance to GM food in Europe and means that Australian growers can feel confident that consumers around the world are happy to continue to eat GM food," she said.

## Reflects Australian surveys

"The report's conclusions reflect a recent survey by Australia's food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand which found that most people are not interested whether food contains GM ingredients. When asked 'Which types of food do you have concerns about?' only 2.9 per cent nominated GM food whereas 24.7 per cent mentioned the safety of fresh fruit or vegetables."

The European report also noted a considerable positive shift in sentiment in the political and media environments as government ministers from around the world recognise the important role of agricultural

biotechnology in addressing world food needs and a changing climate.

Paula said changes in European attitudes parallel the maturing of the GM debate in Australia, recently reflected by the lifting of moratoriums by the NSW and Victorian Governments and support shown by Federal Ministers Tony Burke and Dr Craig Emerson for the use of agricultural biotechnology in Australian agriculture.

During CropLife Australia's recent annual conference, Craig Emerson highlighted the danger of those who promote dogma and superstition at the expense of fact and reason and called for a rational, science-based approach to assessing the role of genetically modified crops.

"I think there is enormous opportunity for the scientific development of genetically modified food production in Australia, with benefits in higher yields, reduced chemical use and lower water use," Craig said.

**The report 'Do European consumers buy GM foods?' was conducted by a team from King's College in London. It can be downloaded from <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/biohealth/research/nutritional/consumerchoice/downloads.html>**



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**FERNANDO BIROCESSI**  
 BS Mechanical Engineer  
 Work: +61-8-8379 5887  
 Mobile: +61-429 939707 +61-406 819569  
[fernandobiroccesi@bigpond.com](mailto:fernandobiroccesi@bigpond.com)  
[www.bulkhandlingsolutions.com.au](http://www.bulkhandlingsolutions.com.au)

