



GE Free New Zealand In Food and Environment Newsletter August 2013

* Please note that some articles have been abbreviated in order to meet size constraints *

Central government and local government disagree about changes to local GE Free policies around New Zealand after minister's threats.

The latest insult to the GE Free movement around the country has been the sudden announcement by National's minister of the environment to amend the RMA to prevent local council precautionary GMO policy. This about-turn follows a 2010 statement by the previous Environment minister stating councils could further protect their districts under the RMA. P2
Several councils around the country are preparing to put either precautionary policy or prohibition of GMOs in their policy statements. Councils are standing firm on this important issue and support is coming from other political parties. Over 10 years GE Free Northland have worked with local councils to protect their region.
If GE crops were to be introduced they threaten to contaminate local food production and resulting costs of mitigation would be paid for by ratepayers.

Local Government NZ Chair Lawrence Yule says councils have taken steps because many people want a more precautionary approach than offered by central government. Mr Yule, mayor of Hastings, said his council wants a 10-year moratorium on GE to give Hawke's Bay food and wine an advantage in export markets.

Help us help councils by donating to GE Free New Zealand.

GE Free AGM

GE Free NZ AGM to be held at Tapu te Ranga marae, 44 Rhine St, Island Bay Wellington.
9.30-3.30 Saturday 24th August.
All members welcome.

First the very successful March P3 against Monsanto on the 25 May with actions in 41 countries around the world then Monsanto UK hacked by Ag3nt47.

March together in solidarity.

To stop privatisation & corporate takeover of our country, and the resulting loss of sovereignty and democracy from TPPA rules.P3

Rally nationwide on September 1st.

www.kiwisconnect.org.nz



10 days after the Monsanto marches around New Zealand(see P 3) our GE Free NZ website was hacked into and a Monsanto logo put onto the homepage, but despite all other pages being removed it was up and running again quickly.

Monsanto upset about the attention have bought the notorious Blackwater Group to help them with their security!
P4

News that NZ co. Tui Compost has signed up to be sole distributor of Monsanto Round-Up has resulted in a boycott and a petition.

We question their motives around school garden competitions. Please check your children's school to be sure that it is to be organic and use open pollinated seeds. **Sign the petition at www.change.org/petitions/tui-garden-products-re-consider-the-recent-partnership-with-monsanto**

GE Free New Zealand continue to try and fight for sovereignty over GE approved foods.

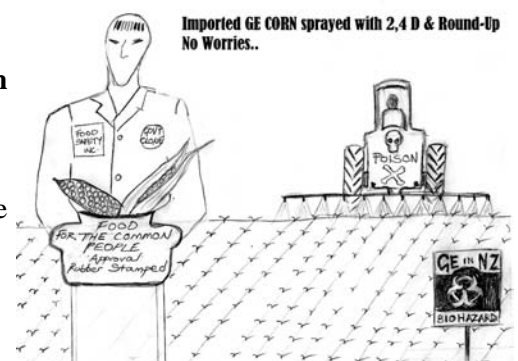
During the recent marches GE Free NZ circulated a petition which called for :

A freeze on all new applications for Genetically Modified (GM) transgenic food by Food Standards Australia & New Zealand FSANZ; while assessment safety guidelines are brought into line with EFSA, the European Food Safety Authority.

An immediate recall on past GM approvals and request that they be reassessed along the current EFSA and Codex guidelines for safety.

Full labelling of all foods made using GM techniques including processed products such as vegetable oils, starches and sugars; and the meat, milk and eggs from animals fed GM feed.

Over 1000 signatures to the petition were presented at a meeting between GE Free New Zealand and Food Safety minister tabled the petition in parliament. We are waiting to hear which select committee will discuss our grievances.



Minister's comments on GMOs

ICWP local government. PR- Dr Kerry Grundy, inter council working party. 5.7.13 (shortened)

Under the current legislation, local government has jurisdiction to manage the risks from GMOs under the RMA in addition to national regulation under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) provided that the requirements of the RMA are met.

This has been set out in a legal opinion obtained by the Working Party from Dr Royden Somerville QC. It has also been confirmed by Ministers for the Environment in both the previous Labour led Government and the present National led Government. It has been further confirmed by Crown Law opinions. The former Minister for the Environment wrote - 5 August 2010:

“ The government’s position is that GMOs are most appropriately controlled by the Hazardous Substances and New Organism’s Act 1996 (HSNO Act)...However, this does not preclude a council from restricting or preventing the use of GMOs in their region, provided that this action meets the relevant requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). ”

Councils in Northland and Auckland in response to on-going concerns expressed by their communities including tangata whenua, have collaboratively investigated the risks posed by GMOs in the environment, together with options to manage those risks, over a period of ten years. They have also lobbied central government extensively to amend HSNO to address those risks, particularly by putting in place a strong mandatory precautionary requirement on decisions to trial or release GMOs to the environment, along with strict liability provisions for possible harm resulting from outdoor use of GMOs.

In response to the continued refusal by central government to address those concerns, the Working Party commissioned draft district/unitary plan provisions, a supporting section 32 evaluation and report, and accompanying legal opinions from Dr Somerville QC to enable councils on the Working Party to insert provisions in their RMA planning documents to manage the risks from outdoor use of GMOs. These provisions provide the following benefits to communities and councils in Northland and Auckland:

(a) An assured, community determined level of risk at the local/regional level compared to lack of surety at the national level. Northland/Auckland communities (as the ultimate risk bearers) have indicated that they want a strong precautionary approach to the risks from GMOs.

(b) The avoidance of potential major financial exposure for constituents and councils from possible GM contamination and/or eradication or control of unwanted GMOs, whilst retaining opportunities to benefit from GMOs in the future should such opportunities arise.

(c) A strict liability regime, including bond and financial fitness rules, (which HSNO does not impose). Linked to this is a duty of care to existing conventional and organic farmers.

(d) Local and regional marketing and branding advantages, based on GE Free status to seek price premiums for agricultural production.

(e) A policy position that is representative of the strong cultural concerns of Maori in Northland and Auckland regarding GMOs

As national regulation fails to provide these assurances to councils and communities, the Working Party will continue to support regulation under the RMA to achieve such outcome. If legislation is amended, councils on the Working Party will be in a position to continue the process of changing their planning documents to address the concerns of their constituents. Ends

Minister buying needless fight with local authorities. 4.7.13

www.labour.org.nz/news/minister-buying-needless-fight-with-local-authorities

NZ Exports & Regional Development Face Destruction If Minister Changes GMO Rules

press.gefree.org.nz/press/20130627.htm

Councils Threatened by Central Government Must Not Cave In

press.gefree.org.nz/press/20130703.htm

www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/138819/communities-want-%27stricter%27-ge-controls

Urgent Call to action for those in the Auckland region (includes Rodney, Waitakere, Franklin region)

Please send a quick email or contact Len Brown, Mayor, your councillors and local board chair, before the important GE issue is discussed again in August asking for a precautionary stance.

www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/representativesbodies/Pages/Home.aspx

Contacts:

www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/ABOUTCOUNCIL/REPRESENTATIVESBOARD/MAORI_RELATIONS/Pages/independentmaoristatutoryboard.aspx

5.7.13 Japan to import 750 tonnes of wheat as alternative to shunned U.S. grade

www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/05/us-wheat-japan-idUSL3N0FBID820130705

Japan will import 750 tonnes of wheat that is not the U.S. western white variety for the first time in over half a century, following a halt on shipments of the U.S. grade. Tokyo stopped imports of this wheat developed particularly for Japan, in late-May after the U.S. announced a GM version of the wheat was growing in Oregon.

NOTE: The ability of GMOs to negatively impact / destroy markets. Examples:

earthopensource.org/index.php/5-gm-crops-impacts-on-the-farm-and-environment/5-11-myth-if-gm-contamination-occurs-it-is-not-a-problem

FSANZ decision challenged

GE Free NZ was told there was no avenue to challenge the Food Safety Authority Australia & New Zealand-FSANZ approval of 2-4D crops through the Australian courts. We then sent our complaint to the NZ Regulatory Review Committee. After 5 months of bureaucratic wrangles, we have now resubmitted our appeal and are awaiting a decision. If our appeal is upheld the approval of 2,4-D, glufosinate ammonium, Round-Up and glyphosate resistant GE food will be reviewed.

Interestingly the USDA has refused to allow the commercial planting of the grain due to a lack of data on environmental and health effects!

This type of GE soy and corn has never undergone any feeding trials. There is a total absence of data and no maximum residue limit for 2-4D. This is of concern since FSANZ tell consumers they use peer reviewed studies to inform their decisions.

How can a total absence of data equate to scientific rigour?

How can we be sure the food that FSANZ approve is safe? We hope our government will act responsibly and ask for a review of the FSANZ decision to approve this controversial application.

GE and the Food Bill changes

www.foodsafety.govt.nz/policy-law/reform-nz-food-regulations/food-bill/questions-answers.htm

GE now back in Food Bill says a rewrite. GE foods now come under the umbrella of the Food Bill for reconsideration, giving an opportunity to safeguard sovereignty around food safety decisions in the face of trade agreements.

Campaigning and lobbying has worked and there is now exclusion of any regulation of seeds for growing. The Bill will also be going back before Select Committee which could allow further improvements.

We still need to ensure our quality small food producers aren't overburdened by costly regulations.

NZ wide March against Monsanto

In Christchurch Steffan Browning - Greens, Jack Heinemann of the Inst. of Gene Ecology and Christine Dann were speakers for around 250 people.

In Wellington Nicky Hager, Gareth Hughes and Sister Loyola spoke to around 600 people who marched to the Agcarm Office. Thanks Claire for all.

In Auckland Lisa Er & Graedon organised a brilliant march with nearly 700 people. Lisa encouraged Akl unitary plan submissions.

New Plymouth was well organised by Jill with lots on facebook, in the press & radio too and around 270 people.

The Nelson march organized by Nadine was positive on every level Seager Mason ex Biogro CEO spoke about GE to about 300 people

In St Arnaud the Biodynamic conference came out in force so amazingly 106 people supported.

Hastings organised an action in 3 days with over 120 people. Thanks Peter

Rotorua had good speakers who discussed solutions with 130 people. Police took photos of number plates and also could have been listening to calls. Was Scion liaising with police? A good story appeared in the paper around a donation of veg and fruit from the march to Salvation Army.

In Whangarei David Clendon, Green MP, Marty Robinson and Zelka talked to over 100+ people. Well done all.

In Dunedin Jason got their march in the local newspaper and on TV there were over 200 people attending. Great.

Tauranga was covered by Bay Sun news and 200 plus people marched. Thanks to Karen and Jean.

Thanks to everyone who organized the marches and those who took part. That was around 3000 people around the country highlighting the issues of GM food and Monsanto. Well done everyone!!!

Please keep pressure on GMOs and Monsanto and guard our food and seed stocks from contamination.

NEXT MARCH 16th OCTOBER

Kiwis Connect for a Positive Future.

Some think New Zealand has less corruption, and more transparency globally than other countries. This no longer rings true to those voicing their concerns to government.

Rally nationwide on September 1st

Kiwis Connect is building awareness about the lobbying of government, particularly by transnational corporations. Our democratic rights are eroded by the influence that corporations have on government.

Why does our government bow to pressure by biotech corporations who want to own our seed stocks and dominate our food supplies? Why should overseas mining companies come in and pollute our environment to make huge profits, of which only a small amount trickles down to New Zealanders?

Why are we selling our assets for short term budget balancing resulting in long term pain? If the government look after the people why do we have 1 in 4 children raised in poverty and old folk unable to afford to heat their homes or eat properly?

These questions, and many others, need to be asked by all of us in NZ. There is little or no discussion in the public arena about the TPPA, the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement. If government signs, investor state dispute clauses allow corporations to sue our government for billions of dollars in projected lost profit, if they feel our environmental laws will affect their profits negatively.

Kiwis Connect for a Positive Future

will co-ordinate family friendly rallies throughout the country to march in solidarity, under banners of their choice, against impending corporate takeover of our country, privatisation, and potential loss of sovereignty and democracy.

Rally nationwide on September 1st the first day of spring.

See website www.kiwiconnect.org.nz

Garden on your berm too - a good way to avoid corporate food control and share with neighbours. See P 6

China warning for NZ on GE food

GE-Free NZ 17.7.13
Evidence presented by international scientists at a conference in China is a warning for New Zealand to keep GE out of the food system, and to focus on understanding the cultural values driving demand for New Zealand food overseas.

Scientists at the Conference on Ethnic Food Cultures & Food Safety, presented on a broad range of topics from ethnic and cultural values of food, to the evidence of harm caused by GE foods. **"China showed great leadership in opening up the debate on GE foods by inviting a group of leading scientists and doctors to present evidence about the cultural, environmental and serious health problems of GE food,"** said GE-Free NZ president **Claire Bleakley, who attended the conference.**

World class scientists included expert Professor Jack Heinemann from Canterbury who presented a 50-year comparison of agricultural methods in the US and Europe. The introduction of GE plants has impacted negatively on yields, diversity and pesticide use across America; since 5 commercial crops (soy, corn, cotton, canola, sugar beets) became commercialised. **"This is stark warning for big players like Federated Farmers and Fonterra and the government that they must listen to customers and provide what the market is demanding. At the moment they are pushing in the wrong direction by following what vested interests in the biotechnology sector want to produce,"** says Jon Carapiet, spokesman for GE-Free NZ.

Study shows health effects of 2,4-D

14.7.13 A peer-reviewed study has found DNA damage and elevated cell death of blood cells in soybean workers exposed to fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides in Brazil. Glyphosate and 2,4-D were among the herbicides used by the exposed group. 2,4-D is increasingly used to combat glyphosate-resistant weeds in GM soybean fields.
www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S138357181300003X

High dioxin levels in pesticides.

www.abc.net.au/am/content/2013/s380772/1.htm 22.7.13

There are calls for a federal agency that regulates pesticides to step up its monitoring and to independently test after high dioxin levels in a commonly-used weed killer have gone undetected because there's no routine testing to ensure that pesticides are actually safe. It was believed that 2,4-D was a cheap, effective and safe weed killer until a team of Queensland scientists found moderate levels of dioxins in samples of 2,4-D.

Four Corners bought a quantity of 2,4-D, imported from China from a warehouse just outside Melbourne and sent it to government labs for testing. The results showed dioxin levels seven times higher than Queensland tests.

Glyphosate increase proposed in US

The US EPA is preparing to massively raise the allowed residue level for glyphosate in some food and feed crops, including soy. The new EPA regulation would allow "oilseed" crops such as flax, canola, and soybean oil to contain glyphosate at levels up to 40 parts per million up from 20 ppm, which is over 100,000 times the concentration needed to induce the growth of human breast cancer cells in vitro, according to a recent study:
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23756170>

In other crops such as potatoes levels may go from 200 ppm to 6,000 ppm.

New report on increased herbicide

A new report by Food & Water Watch analysing official USDA & EPA data finds that the adoption of GE crops by farmers has increased herbicide use over the past 9 years in the U.S. The report can be downloaded here:
<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/superweeds/>

UK Professor Tim Benton tells families to cut amount they eat

'by a third' warning consumption levels were "unsustainable" and waste excessive as population increases.
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10193689/Food-crisis-Professor-tells-families-to-cut-amount-they-eat-by-a-third.html
(continued P6)

Long-term toxicology study on pigs fed a combined GM soy and GM maize diet. Judy A. Carman

Pigs fed a GMO diet exhibited heavier uteri and a higher rate of severe stomach inflammation than pigs fed a comparable non-GMO diet. Given the widespread use of GMO feed for livestock as well as humans this is a cause for concern. The results indicate that it would be prudent for GM crops that are destined for human food and animal feed, including stacked GM crops, to undergo long-term animal feeding studies preferably before commercial planting, particularly for toxicological and reproductive effects. Humans have a similar gastrointestinal tract to pigs, and these GM crops are widely consumed by people, particularly in the USA, so it would be prudent to determine if the findings of this study are applicable to humans.

www.organic-systems.org/journal/81/8106.pdf

US Military Tracks GMO Campaigners and Independent Scientists

Sustainable Pulse 13.7.13
The biggest German daily published a shocking article revealing how Monsanto, the US Military and US government track campaigners and independent scientists who study the dangers of GMOs; advancing "the interests of their corporations" using Monsanto as an example. "It is noticeable that anyone who criticizes Monsanto has their life made very difficult."
Targets are scientists such as Australian Judy Carman ;several websites where she publishes studies are regularly the target of hacker attacks – Evaluations of IP protocols show that not only Monsanto regularly tracks the pages of these sites, but also various institutions of the U.S. government, including the military:- Navy Network Information Center. Federal Aviation Administration & United States Army Intelligence Center..."
sustainablepulse.com/2013/07/13/us-military-tracks-gmo-campaigners-and-independent-scientists-english-exclusive

EU Commission presses ahead with SmartStax pesticidal maize authorization.

Testbiotech

On 11 July, the EU Commission and representatives from EU Member States will meet again to vote on the market authorisation of GE maize SmartStax for use in food and feed. A Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences GE variant producing 6 insecticidal proteins and tolerant to 2 herbicides; SmartStax, and 9 other new GE maize variants will be on the agenda in July, all of them produce insecticidal toxins and are resistant to herbicides. Pollen from GE maize MON810 may receive authorisation for usage in food such as honey. Recently, Testbiotech wrote to the EU Commission about Judy Carman's new findings from feeding trials with pigs using similar maize variants showing health impacts such as severe inflammation. With new information on relevant risks, EU regulation requests precaution.

Seeds of doubt - Europe is right to be cautious over GM crops

Financial Times 21.7.13

www.ft.com/cms/s/0/73b3c1dc-f08d-11e2-929c-00144feabdc0.html

Monsanto, has abandoned its decade-long bid for permission to grow a range of GE crops in European soil. The move comes shortly after Owen Paterson, the UK environment minister, warned that Europe was missing out on one of the most important agricultural advances since the 18th century. That conclusion is premature.

Biotech seed falters, insecticide use surges in corn belt

9.7.13

www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/07/09/198051447/as-biotech-seed-falters-insecticide-use-surges-in-corn-belt

Rootworms are resistant to one type of GE corn, so government scientists appeal to farmers to limit use of new GE corn preserving effectiveness of its protection against rootworm. Many are doubling up on insect-fighting technology, deploying more chemical pesticides. Companies like Syngenta or AMVAC Chemical that sell soil insecticides for use in corn fields are reporting huge increases in sales: 50 or even 100 percent over the past two years.

UK Citizens Continue to Reject GMO food and Even Farmers Don't Want to Eat it

19.7.13

www.gmeducation.org/home-page-top-story/p213449-uk-citizens-continue-to-reject-gmo-food-and-even-farmers-don-t-want-to-eat-it.html The consumer survey carried out by YouGov confirmed previous polls that less than a quarter of people questioned support GMO technology. Nearly 70% said they would "prefer to buy conventional" (GE Free food). Also a major slap in the face for the UK government and its pro-GMO mouth, Farm Minister Owen Paterson, 43% of people said they "were completely against" the government promoting GM technology.

USDA researchers confirm Heinemann conclusions on RNA-interference risks

18.7.13

1. RNA-interference pesticides will need special safety testing.
2. RNAi-based insecticidal crops: Potential effects on nontarget species - A new peer-reviewed paper in the journal Bioscience draws attention to potential hazards on nontarget species of pesticides and GMOs made with RNA-interference (RNAi) gene-silencing techniques. These hazards could include off-target gene silencing or immune stimulation.

The paper by 2 employees of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, says the nature of these new pesticides and GMOs makes prediction of toxic effects "challenging" and suggests the development of a special testing and regulatory framework to assess their safety. It confirms the conclusions of another recently published paper by researchers Jack Heinemann, Sarah Agapito-Tenfen and Judy Carman: www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412013000494

Science Media Centre New Zealand and the GMO "regulator" FSANZ dismissed the Heinemann et al study and claimed no special risks were posed by these RNAi type products (www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2013/05/22/fsanz-defends-stance-on-gene-silencing-experts-respond).

Let's see how they respond to this new paper. It will be politically difficult for them to dismiss the findings of USDA researchers in such a dishonest way.

Prof Heinemann dismantles attempt to boost GM yield data

Author response to GMO Pundit David Tribe 2.7.13

www.inbi.canterbury.ac.nz/response.shtml

Points in brief:

*A recent peer-reviewed long-term analysis of North American and Western European staple crop agriculture provides evidence of sustained higher yields and lower pesticide use in Western Europe. *Conclusion was that Western Europe has been able to better focus its innovation strategy on the kinds of biotechnology – both germplasm and crop management – that are needed to transition to a more sustainable high yield agriculture than has North America. A notable difference between strategies is the adoption of GM in North America but not in Western Europe.

NOTE: www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14929 For more on the study which shows that GM farming as practiced in the US is being left behind by the mostly non-GM farming practiced in Europe.

Rotterdam bans Monsanto's Roundup as part of new Green initiative

Fritz Kreiss 19.7.1

occupymonsanto360.org/blog/rotterdam-bans-monsantos-roundup-as-part-of-new-green-initiative

Recently Rotterdam city council voted to ban Roundup herbicide. The initiative was begun largely thanks to a citizen run petition campaign appropriately named, "Non-toxic Sidewalks for Our Children". While glyphosate (Roundup's "active" ingredient) has long been believed to be quite non-toxic, recent studies have shown that to be very much untrue.

The herbicide, currently the most used in the world by a large margin, has been found to be especially harmful when combined with the adjuvants labeled as "inert ingredients" which are designed to increase delivery of the pesticide to target plants.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY WEEK

(in Australia 19-25th August)

australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org

It's time to speak up for what we believe in: fairness across every aspect of the food system, from the soil and its micro-organisms; to the plants and animals; to the farmers and food workers; to food processors and independent retailers, chefs and cafes; for those on low incomes who struggle to afford good food, or to buy enough food – for children, women and men all over this country and all over the world who are suffering because of an unjust food system.

UK Professor Tim Benton article continued from P4...

"We are in a situation where demand globally is going to outstrip supply." Warning food would become "the fundamental issue of the next half century" and wars would be fought over water and access to land. The head of the Global Food Security working group said it was no longer good enough for Ministers in the UK to think exclusively of ways the country could produce more food, through initiatives such as GM, and that Government had to work on "demand". Supermarkets should cut pack sizes, bin buy-one-get-one-free promotions, restaurants serve-up smaller portions and far more had to be done on tackling food waste. Global Food Security estimates households throw away £500 of food per year, or 5kg a week.

Our biosecurity is at risk from free trade deals 11.7.13

says John Lancashire, The former president of Inst. of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences stated that government adherence to the Precautionary Principle has shifted towards a greater tolerance to risk. The restructuring of government departments has led to a culture of short term solutions not the longterm strategy required. The auditor general's report spoke of free trade and tourism resulting in incursions.

NEW ZEALAND EVENTS

In support of food sovereignty

GE Free NZ will be promoting well known activist and campaigner Vandana Shiva's initiative on **2nd Oct -World day of recognition of Safe GE Free Seed. What can you do in your area?** Organise a seedy Sunday seed swap or a stall selling seedlings and heritage seed varieties. Show the Seeds of Freedom. Start a local seedsavers group, talk with kids about seed saving. Let us know your ideas.

16th Oct –March against Monsanto.

March for our food sovereignty. Lets see even more folk out on the streets. We will be promoting both days on facebook. Tell us your plans.

Claire Bleakley of GE Free has for many years had a successful seed day with stalls in Greytown centre together with her organic pod and others in the Wairarapa, including local Green dollar and Transition Town groups. Work for change in your area too.

Gardening on your berm

All around the country people are making sheet mulch, no dig gardens on their berms / verges and instead of mowing using valuable resources (fuel) growing food and sharing it with neighbours .

What a great way to get together with your street. Using the street as your garden also helps to slow traffic, beautifies the area and provides local home grown food.

Get together with others on your street on the first day of spring and put in a garden on September 1st or during food sovereignty weeks. You'll be pleased you did when you start harvesting. Happy gardening!!

New blog site for the gardener

www.sustainablegardener.org

Everything you need to know about growing food sustainably! A new blog site written by Adrian Myers to inspire, enlighten and instill a passion for growing food sustainably.

GE Free AGM

GE Free NZ AGM to be held at Tapu te Ranga marae, 44 Rhine St, Island Bay Wellington. 9.30-3.30 Saturday 24th August. All members welcome.

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