

# section 3.12 |



appendix 3

## Outcomes of Consultation: Submissions from the Public

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## 3.12 Opportunities from use or avoidance

### Background

Warrant item (i) sought information from submitters about their views on the opportunities to New Zealand of using, or avoiding the use of, genetic modification. The Warrant item stated:

the opportunities that may be open to New Zealand from the use or avoidance of genetic modification, genetically modified organisms, and products

### Outline of this section

This section, as with other sections, will present submitters views about the opportunities available to New Zealand from:

- the use of genetic modification
- the avoidance of genetic modification.

### Opportunities from use of genetic modification

As Table 3.18 shows, 1461 public submitters (13.4% of the total) identified opportunities from genetic modification use. Of those that identified opportunities, however, almost all added that their recognition of these opportunities did not mean they supported genetic modification use. For instance, they acknowledged that there might be a wide range of new products, given the creation of new genetically modified organisms, or new strains of existing products. Also, productivity may well increase although, submitters stated, such increased productivity and profitability would be mostly limited to multinational companies. The only exceptions to submitters' rejection of genetic modification use, despite opportunities, were in the health area. Here, some submitters would accept genetic modification use for health care opportunities.

**Table 3.18 Opportunities from genetic modification use (n = 1461)**

<b>Opportunities from GM-use</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Human health benefits	690	47.2
Increased productivity – current industry sectors	511	74.1
Increased range of products	315	21.6
Increased profitability – current industry sectors	217	14.9
Environmental benefits	125	8.6
Generalised national economic benefits	78	5.3
Maintain science/research capability	77	5.3
Increase science/research capability	65	4.4
Enhance animal welfare	42	2.9
Increased competitiveness – current industry sectors	34	2.3
Develop new knowledge-based industry	22	1.5
New global leadership role	15	1.0
General/unspecified benefits	10	0.7
Cheaper food for poorer economies	6	0.4
Benefits to farmers in developing countries	3	0.2
Create more jobs	2	0.1
Retain scientific opportunities	2	0.1
Safeguard biodiversity	2	0.1
Other	25	1.7
<p>The “Other” category included the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• benefits to investors</li> <li>• protection of other countries from GM disaster</li> <li>• fewer chemical inputs</li> <li>• provision of seed and food for poor under-nourished countries</li> <li>• support of universities’ international status</li> <li>• beneficial exploitation of environment;</li> <li>• avoidance of trade embargoes</li> <li>• benefits to human society.</li> </ul>		

Multiple response

## Opportunities from avoidance of genetic modification

Public submitters were relatively united in their views about the opportunities presented by genetic modification avoidance. Of the 5375 who wrote about opportunities, 71.1% stated their belief that New Zealand would gain substantial competitive advantage from developing our organic agricultural and horticultural sectors. Twenty percent anticipated competitive advantage from remaining genetic modification-free. Others identified environmental and health benefits. (See Table 3.19.)

Public submitters saw genetic modification avoidance as an opportunity to overcome New Zealand's current lack of competitive advantage, as primary producers struggle to compete with larger economies and producers and increase their market share. By remaining genetic modification-free and shifting to organic production processes, submitters argued, New Zealand has the unique opportunity to develop niche markets in specialist, high quality organic products.

It is worth noting the confusion that some public submitters seemed to have in their understanding of the distinction between genetic modification-free and organic. Sometimes their comments suggested they perceived them as the same thing and sometimes their comments suggested that they thought current production processes were organic, that is that organic production is the alternative to genetic modification-enhanced production. However, others acknowledged New Zealand's currently high use of fertilisers and pesticides, and the negative impacts of these on current organic production.

Submitters described how New Zealand could take advantage of its isolation and relatively unpolluted environment by remaining genetic modification-free in a world where genetic modification avoidance by other countries is likely to be rare. The country would be well-placed to provide organic produce to meet growing demand from countries that can not meet their own needs given their genetic modification use. Some cited evidence that products of genetic modification are already losing their appeal and market share. Further, given that these larger economies would be precluded from participating in this niche market, our producers would not need to compete with larger producers that currently have economies of scale that make them more competitive.

Submitters also argued that New Zealand could become a world leader in its rejection of genetic modification technologies in the same way as its anti-nuclear stance gives New Zealand a special status (in which many submitters expressed pride). New Zealand could also become a world leader in organic production techniques and research.

**Table 3.19 Opportunities from genetic modification avoidance (n = 5375)**

<b>Opportunities from GM-avoidance</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Competitive advantage from organic production	3825	71.1
Environmental benefits	1283	23.9
Competitive advantage from GM-free production	1074	20.0
Protect human health	1070	19.9
New global leadership role	570	10.6
Generalised national economic benefits	484	9.0
Specific economic benefits (eg tourism, alternative farming, seedbank)	10	0.2
Other	12	0.2
The "Other" category included the following suggestions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting the disabled from genetic discrimination</li> <li>• maintaining environmental and cultural integrity.</li> </ul>		

Multiple response