

New Zealand's farmers fight regional GMO regulations

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Federated Farmers and anti-GE advocates are squaring up in the High Court over the right of communities to have a say in the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) – especially crops.

The national farming lobby is challenging an Environment Court ruling from May 2015 that regional councils do have such a right under the Resource Management Act (RMA).

It is arguing that councils cannot use the RMA to control the use of GMOs.

It says central government passed the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act expressly for that purpose, and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is the sole regulator of GMOs.

The farmers argue that parliament cannot have intended for local councils to duplicate that job, or thwart the authority of the EPA.

Their appeal, which is being heard in the High Court at Whangarei this week, is a bid to overturn a decision by the Environment Court's Judge Newhook, who found that councils did have a role to play in the use of GMOs.

He found all resource use was governed by the RMA unless specifically exempted and, since regional councils were charged with the sustainable management of resources, they must therefore be able to consider the social, economic and ecological effects of genetic modification.

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In Northland, farmer and former regional councillor Ian Walker said local councils lacked the scientific smarts to make those sorts of decisions. . . .

"None of our councillors has a science background," he said.

"The EPA is the agency that does have the scientific knowledge to control GMO releases, and it should not be able to be undermined by councils," he says.

Read full, original post: [Farmers challenge GE ruling in High Court](#)