

**National Federation of Women's Institutes, Food Commission, UNISON,  
Soil Association, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, GM Free Cymru,  
Genetic Food Alert, National Association of Health Stores.**

Dear [FSA Board Member],

### **THE FSA AND THE GM PUBLIC DEBATE**

We write on behalf of the undersigned organisations to express concern about recent developments relating to the GM Public Debate. We are all currently supporting the work of the GM Public Debate Steering Committee to ensure that a genuinely independent Public Debate about GM food and crops can take place.

The Board of the FSA may be balanced and representative of a wide spectrum of views, however there is a strong consensus amongst consumer and environment organisations that the published views and statements of the FSA and its Chair are indistinguishable from those of the pro-GM lobby and do not properly represent public health and consumer interests. This is evident in the FSA's refusal to acknowledge the Precautionary Principle; in its failure to acknowledge the concerns of the British Medical Association; in its insistence that genetic modification is merely an extension of conventional breeding; in its endorsement of the discredited concept of 'substantial equivalence'; and in its willingness to rely on unpublished or confidential corporate data that is neither independent, nor peer-reviewed nor available to the public. Many of these problems are illustrated in the FSA's booklet '*GM Food - opening up the debate*'.

We note with approval the FSA Board's stated policy not to be "drawn into any campaign 'promoting' GM". The Board's minutes also state that "Board members noted that the Agency's contribution to the Government GM debate had to be handled impartially. The Agency had no role to promote industry interests, but its priority was consumer choice and public safety."

Our concern is that, despite the Board's intentions, the FSA's actual involvement with the Public Debate and with the GM Science Review, far from being neutral and impartial, is widely seen as highly prejudiced towards the GM industry's position. This obvious bias will greatly undermine the credibility of the FSA, the GM debate process and the image of the Government. The media have already reported that the debate will be 'rigged' and the current activities of the FSA are greatly reinforcing this perception.

We are, therefore, especially concerned that the FSA has chosen not to participate in the widely supported debate process under the supervision of the Public Debate Steering Committee, but has instead launched its own breakaway debate. This initiative was not discussed with the Public Debate Steering Committee. We question the legitimacy of this decision.

We therefore ask you to call a halt to the FSA's Debate events until they have been fully evaluated and approved by the Public Debate Steering Committee and until they can play a publicly acceptable role within the recognised GM Debate. We also believe the FSA's role as 'independent advisor' to the GM Science Review is untenable and should be terminated.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Carey, National Chairman, **National Federation of Women's Institutes**  
Dr Tim Lobstein, Director, **Food Commission**  
Dave Prentice, General Secretary, **UNISON**  
Lord Melchett, Policy Director, **Soil Association**  
Pete Riley, Senior Food & Farming Campaigner, **Friends of the Earth**  
Stephen Tindale, Director, **Greenpeace**  
Dr Brian John, **GM Free Cymru**  
Dr Mike Abrahams, Director, **National Association of Health Stores (NAHS)**  
Robert Vint, National Coordinator, **Genetic Food Alert (GFA)**