

Vaughan Gething AC / AM  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd  
Deputy Minister for Health



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04 583  
Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00107/15

William Powell AM  
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter to the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food in December about an apparent contradiction between Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency (FSA) policies on genetically modified (GM) crops and GM feed.

The FSA is a UK-wide non-Ministerial Government Department, accountable to the National Assembly for Wales (Westminster Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament) through Health Ministers. I am therefore responding to your letter as Deputy Minister for Health and also on behalf of my ministerial colleague Rebecca Evans AM, the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food, whose portfolio includes GM crop issues.

### Food and Feed

The FSA is an independent regulator and in terms of EU law relating to food and animal feed, including GM food and feed, is the central competent authority for the UK. The main objective of the FSA is to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. The FSA's pledge is to put the consumer first in everything it does.

The safety evaluation of GM foods in the European Union (EU), including the UK, is based on rigorous scrutiny of scientific data and complies with internationally agreed guidelines. All GM foods to be marketed in the EU, as well as animal feed, are subject to a mandatory pre-market safety assessment under the GM food and feed regulation (EC/1829/2003) before they can be permitted to enter the food/feed chain. This safety assessment is carried out on a case-by-case basis and is the responsibility of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). EFSA is tasked with providing independent scientific advice and clear communication on existing and emerging risks.

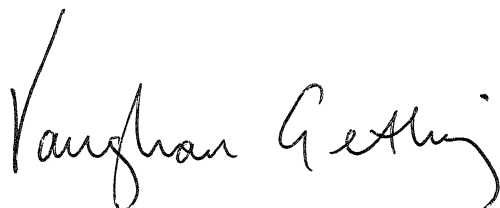
The EU authorisation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) permitted in food and feed is based on assuring the food or feed is safe to be consumed. The FSA has confidence in the work of EFSA in carrying out the centralised risk assessment of GMOs.

As a science and evidence based organisation the FSA considers all the evidence before deciding on policy. To date all the evidence suggests that food and feed derived from GMOs is as safe as that from non-GM sources. Under EU food and feed regulation, labelling is required for all food and feed products derived from GM sources, regardless of the presence of detectable novel genetic material in the final product and regardless of the quantity of intentionally used GM ingredient present. Such labelling rules apply at the point of sale to allow consumers choice over buying foods containing GM ingredients. All food and feed that contain, consist of, or are produced from GMOs have to be labelled as such. The FSA therefore agrees that consumers should be able to make an informed choice about whether to buy GM foods.

### Crops

The Deputy Minister for Farming and Food's response to the Committee in October 2014 was in relation to GM crops only. The Welsh Government has a long-standing policy that is to maintain a restrictive and precautionary approach to GM crop cultivation that is consistent with UK and EU law. The Deputy Minister for Farming and Food recognises that within the scientific community GM crops and their cultivation remain a controversial topic and her policy approach is, therefore, one of caution and recognises the need to protect our investment in clean, sustainable agriculture and our unique environment and landscape.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

**Vaughan Gething AC / AM**  
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Deputy Minister for Health