

# Gene Technology Bill Feedback Template

## Table of Contents

[Instructions – How To Use This Template](#)

[General Approach](#)

[Feedback Examples](#)

### [1. Comments on the Bill](#)

[Summary](#)

[Section 1: Lack of Precautionary Measures](#)

[Section 2: Risks to Farming and Exports](#)

[Section 3: Bodily Autonomy and Public Consent](#)

[Section 4: Weak Oversight, Overreach, and Sovereignty Concerns](#)

[Section 5: Scientific and Safety Concerns](#)

[Section 6: Economic Concerns](#)

### [2. Recommendations on the Bill](#)

# Instructions – How To Use This Template

1. **Open the Parliament online submissions form.**
2. **Select whether you are giving feedback as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.** You can also indicate whether you want to also make an oral submission. Then click 'Next' to go to page two.
3. **Enter your details** (note: the name you enter here will be published alongside your feedback at the end of the submission process, but your email will remain private. Adding your phone number is optional). Click 'Next' to go through to page three.
4. **Scroll down to the two text boxes at the bottom of the page.** The first box is for your comments on the Bill, and the second is for your recommendations.
5. **Enter Comments.** Copy the bullet points you agree with from the “Comments Template” below and paste them into the first text box on the Parliament online submissions form. It's important to use your own selection (and words if you can) so that your feedback is unique to you.
6. **Enter Recommendations:** Repeat this process using the “Recommendations Template” below, this time copying and pasting into the second box on the page—again tweaking it as appropriate.
7. **When you are satisfied with your feedback, click next, confirm your details and responses,** download a copy of your feedback if you choose (click on the green PRINT button at the top right of the page) and then press the green Submit button at the bottom of the page. You will be sent confirmation of your feedback, which does not include your responses.

# General Approach

## When making your feedback:

1. Highlight the need for a **precautionary principle** to ensure safety for future generations.
2. Demand **mandatory labelling** of all gene-edited products.
3. Stress the importance of **independent, local safety reviews**.
4. Advocate for **local decision-making powers** to protect non-GMO farming and ecological integrity.
5. Argue for the retention of **existing protections** under the HSNO and RMA Acts.
6. Emphasise that decisions on gene technologies must align with New Zealand's **cultural values** and **Treaty of Waitangi obligations**.

# Feedback Examples

## 1. Comments on the Bill

*Below is a structured list of points to help you craft your feedback. You can use this as a guide to express your concerns clearly and comprehensively.*

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### Summary

The proposed Gene Technology Bill has been developed without adequate consultation with critical stakeholders, farmers, and scientists. This lack of engagement undermines the democratic process and raises concerns that the views and interests of those directly impacted by the bill are not being fully considered.

The rushed nature of the legislative process, combined with limited transparency, risks eroding public trust and support. Effective consultation and transparency are essential for ensuring that the bill is both robust and widely supported, but without these, the legislation could fail to reflect the needs and concerns of all affected parties.

### Section 1: Lack of Precautionary Measures

#### 1. No Precautionary Principle

- The Bill abandons the precautionary principle, replacing it with a risk-proportionate framework. This fails to prioritise the prevention of harm to nature, public health, and the rural economy, risking long-term environmental and economic damage.

#### 2. No Liability for Gene Technology Users

- Clause 187 provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for users of gene technology, enabling irresponsibility without accountability for mistakes or risks.

#### 3. No Standards for Safety or Ethics

- The Bill fails to mandate safety standards or ethical guidelines to prevent harm to humans, animals, or ecosystems. There is no consideration of animal welfare or long-term ecological impacts.

#### **4. No Labelling Requirements**

- Products resulting from gene editing that are exempt from regulation will not require labelling, denying consumers and farmers the ability to make informed choices and violating the principle of consent.

## **Section 2: Risks to Farming and Exports**

### **1. Threat to Non-GMO Farming**

- The Bill prevents regional or district councils from enacting precautionary measures or declaring GMO-free zones, undermining the protection of non-GMO farming and local food systems.

### **2. Loss of Clean-Green Reputation**

- Deregulation and the introduction of unlabelled gene-edited products risk damaging New Zealand's global reputation as a clean, green, and sustainable producer, negatively impacting export markets.

### **3. Economic Impact on Farmers**

- GE farming relies heavily on patents, increasing costs for farmers and reducing profitability. This corporate-driven approach undermines the traditional, diverse agricultural practices of New Zealand.

### **4. Unrecoverable Contamination**

- Once gene-edited organisms are released, their genetic material can spread through natural processes like pollination, making contamination irreversible and unmanageable.

## Section 3: Bodily Autonomy and Public Consent

### 1. Mandatory Authorisations Based on Overseas Approvals

- The Bill allows "mandatory medical activity authorisations" for gene technology-based medicines or therapies that have been approved by two overseas regulators. This bypasses New Zealand's own regulatory scrutiny and poses significant risks:
  - **Loss of Local Oversight:** These authorisations remove the opportunity for New Zealand to independently assess the safety, efficacy, and appropriateness of these technologies for its unique population.
  - **Safety Concerns:** Different populations and environments may respond differently to medical interventions. Without local trials and reviews, risks specific to New Zealanders may go undetected.
  - **Transparency Issues:** The lack of public consultation or oversight for these fast-tracked authorisations undermines public trust and prevents meaningful scrutiny of the safety and effectiveness of such technologies.
  - **Ethical Violations:** Without labelling or traceability, individuals may unknowingly be subjected to treatments they might otherwise choose to avoid, violating principles of informed consent.
  - **Sovereignty Erosion:** By relying on foreign decisions, the Bill cedes control over New Zealand's health and safety standards to international authorities whose priorities may differ from New Zealand's values and needs.
- **Lessons from the COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine Rollout:** The COVID-19 mRNA gene therapy vaccines, fast-tracked under emergency authorisations and heavily influenced by overseas regulators, have caused significant harm in New Zealand. Thousands of Kiwis have reported injuries, and there have been deaths linked to these vaccines. This tragic experience underscores the critical need for rigorous local oversight and safety assessments before approving gene technology-based medical interventions. It is irresponsible and dangerous to allow foreign regulators to dictate the introduction of similar technologies in New Zealand without robust scrutiny.
- This provision represents a step towards deregulation that undermines public safety, autonomy, and trust, particularly in light of recent experiences with rushed

medical authorisations.

## **2. Removal of Labelling and Traceability**

- Without labelling, New Zealanders are subjected to a de facto experiment with gene-edited food and medicines. This violates the right to informed consent and prevents individuals from monitoring and managing their exposure to these technologies.

## **Section 4: Weak Oversight, Overreach, and Sovereignty Concerns**

### **1. Centralisation of Authority**

- The establishment of a central Gene Technology Regulator concentrates decision-making power in a single entity, removing the ability of regional councils and communities to implement precautionary measures or protect their local environments. This undermines local decision-making and the ability to address region-specific risks.

### **2. Lack of Independent Oversight**

- The regulator operates without clear checks and balances, creating a significant risk of arbitrary or politically influenced decisions. Without robust oversight mechanisms, the regulator could prioritise industry or political interests over public health and safety.

### **3. International Influence**

- The Bill permits significant deference to international regulatory decisions, particularly through provisions allowing for joint risk assessments with overseas regulators. This approach risks overlooking New Zealand's unique ecological, cultural, and economic contexts and diminishes the nation's ability to set its own standards.

### **4. International Trade Agreements Undermining Sovereignty**

- It has come to light that the Gene Technology Bill may be tied to a trade agreement with the United States. If true, this represents a profound compromise of New Zealand's national sovereignty.
  - Decisions affecting New Zealand's health, safety, and environment should be made independently and transparently, based on the specific needs

and values of New Zealanders—not dictated by the terms of international trade agreements or foreign commercial interests.

- The Bill's emphasis on aligning with international regulatory frameworks and facilitating trade risks prioritising economic objectives over the welfare of New Zealand's people, ecosystems, and agricultural economy.
- Such trade-driven policymaking jeopardises the nation's ability to maintain its clean-green reputation, protect biodiversity, and ensure public trust in regulatory processes.

#### **5. Overreach Through Regulatory Capture**

- By removing many safety and precautionary requirements, the Bill enables the Gene Technology Regulator to act as a facilitator of gene technology rather than a neutral overseer. This raises concerns about potential regulatory capture, where the regulator could prioritise biotech industry interests over public health, environmental safety, and ethical considerations.

## **Section 5: Scientific and Safety Concerns**

### **1. Lack of Scientific Certainty**

- Gene editing techniques like CRISPR are known to cause unintended genomic disruptions, as noted in recent studies. These long-term risks are ignored in the Bill's regulatory framework.

### **2. Bio-Contamination Risks**

- Biotech processes are inherently variable and prone to contamination. The removal of traceability provisions increases the likelihood of undetected and unmanaged risks.

### **3. Lab Accidents and Oversight**

- Global evidence shows that laboratory accidents are common. Deregulating biotechnology in this context heightens the potential for significant and uncontrollable risks.

### **4. NZ as a Testing Ground for Unproven Technologies**

- The Bill could turn New Zealand into a testing ground for high-risk, unproven genetic technologies. With deregulated oversight, global biotech companies may use New Zealand as a site for experimental trials, taking advantage of looser



regulations. This could expose New Zealand's environment, agriculture, and public health to potentially harmful technologies without proper long-term studies or risk assessments, making it a "dumping ground" for risky genetic experiments.

## **Section 6: Economic Concerns**

### **1. New Zealand's GE-Free Advantage**

New Zealand is one of the last places on earth with a GE-free status—a unique brand value that sets us apart in the global market. This natural, clean-green image is a cornerstone of our economy and a key reason why international consumers choose our products. Tasmania has recognised the value of this position, extending its GE-free moratorium until 2029 to protect its reputation and agricultural economy. New Zealand risks losing a competitive edge if it abandons its GE-free status.

### **2. Impact on Exports**

The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) report, commissioned by Organic Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ), projects a devastating \$10-20 billion drop in export demand across the entire agricultural export sector if we lose our GE-free status. This Bill risks undermining our premium positioning and damaging key international markets that value non-GE, organic, and sustainably produced goods.

### **3. Job Loss and Rural Impact**

The agricultural sector employs 360,000 Kiwis whose livelihoods depend on New Zealand's reputation for quality and sustainability. This Bill threatens their jobs, rural communities, and way of life by shifting the costs and liability for GE contamination onto the GE-free sector. Food producers who have built their businesses on New Zealand's GE-free status could face financial ruin, while rural economies will bear the brunt of this billion-dollar downturn.

## 2. Recommendations on the Bill

*In this section, you can make recommendations about the TPB. Here are some recommendations you could use:*

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I oppose the Gene Technology Bill for several reasons, including its lack of adequate consultation, insufficient safety measures, and significant risks to New Zealand's environment, sovereignty, and public trust.

New Zealanders deserve a robust, transparent, and precautionary approach to gene technology. I urge the government to reject the current Bill and instead pursue policies that prioritise safety, ethical standards, and the protection of our environment, culture, and agricultural economy.