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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**22 May 2014**

## High Court judgment hurts New Zealand Inc, emphasises need for review of GM law

A High Court judgment has highlighted the dire need for a review of out-of-date New Zealand law on genetic modification (GM) technology, said Graeme Peters, chief executive of Agcarm.

“Some aspects of the regulation of new organisms under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) 1996 are no longer relevant. They are seriously out of synch with international norms and stifle innovation in New Zealand,” Mr Peters said.

Based on an interpretation of the HSNO Act and its regulations, the judgment has serious implications because, in addition to curbing new breeding technologies, it might open generally accepted, safe, and long-established science to the cumbersome regulations covering GM organisms as defined under the Act, Mr Peters said.

Agcarm is an industry association with members at the forefront of technology development in the plant science industry. Agcarm supports a modern, science and evidence-based approach to regulation of technology – including GM - which examines the risks and sets appropriate controls based on these risks. Agcarm supports effective regulation but proactively identifies laws and regulation that are so onerous that they stop research, as is happening with GM in New Zealand.

New Zealand is already a backwater when it comes to GM innovation and extension, with not one approval for the release of a GM crop. Internationally, a record 175 million hectares - an area more than six times the total land area of New Zealand – of GM crops were grown globally in 2013.

“The government must act to repair the damage caused by the judgment, which says that the EPA must regulate technologies which speed up natural, targeted genetic changes in plant species to find new, beneficial varieties.

“Many of the foods we eat today are the result of natural genetic mutations that create new varieties which might be a different colour, bigger, sweeter, easy to peel, or have better resistance to pests and diseases. Carrots used to be small, thin, white, and spangled (divided), but through genetic improvement over centuries are now large, orange, smooth, and great to eat.

“New Zealand is now at odds with other countries which have examined the two technologies covered in the judgment. The United States, Australia, Germany, and the consensus of an international

working group all found that varieties developed using the two particular techniques should not be classified as genetically modified organisms.”

The HSNO Act was written in the mid-1990s, before GM varieties were planted commercially in 1996. Since there has been huge change in the technologies and widespread adoption of GM foods such as maize, soy, canola, and rice, and fibres such as cotton.

“This is yet another blow for New Zealand science, which wanted to use the techniques to develop new species which would generate export receipts for New Zealand or protect the environment. Instead, the judgment is another reason for scientists to end their research and pursue opportunities overseas,” Mr Peters said.

### **About Agcarm**

Agcarm is the industry association which represents crop protection, animal health and rural supplier businesses. Agcarm members distribute and sell the majority of veterinary medicines and crop protection products in New Zealand. Agcarm members promote responsible use of products right through the product life cycle, from research to disposal.

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