

Food labelling review must put consumers first

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Consumers are being misled and treated as lab rats by food labelling regulation that are weak and biased towards maintaining industry profits, according to Greens NSW MP John Kaye.

Commenting on a story in today's Sydney Morning Herald ('Made in Australia: if only it was sown and grown here', page 9, <http://bit.ly/smh100306>), Dr Kaye said: "From foods that come from overseas but labelled 'Made in Australia' to the lack of warnings about genetically engineered or nanotechnology ingredients, consumers are being denied the right to make healthy and ethical choices about the foods they purchase.

"The large supermarket chains and the multinational food processing companies have called the shots and left Australians without meaningful warning about trans fats, brightly coloured artificial food dyes and salt, sugar and fat contents.

"The food regulator's labelling inquiry has a huge task ahead if it is to restore consumer confidence.

"The discussion paper released yesterday deals with most issues in a neutral fashion.

"However the commentary and questions relating to the use of nanotechnology, irradiation and genetically modified foods display a singular level of bias.

"The paper suggests that labelling of these technologies should not be allowed to unduly inhibit their economic development.

"This is an extraordinary assertion of the right of a new technology to be tested on consumers without their informed consent.

"Even the discussion question related to these technologies is prejudiced against full disclosure labelling.

"The qualifier 'given the present state of scientific knowledge' pre-empts the right of consumers to make up their own mind about their willingness to expose themselves to risks that may not have yet been scientifically established," Dr Kaye said.

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