



## POSITION PAPER ON PURE FOOD AND GENETIC MODIFICATION

*IPEF – Bali Round, March 2023*

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga brings a Te Tiriti o Waitangi perspective to the trade policy space, which requires the Government of Aotearoa New Zealand (the Crown) to uphold and actively protect Māori rights to exercise authority over our lands, waters, resources and all taonga, including the ecosystem, as well as Māori laws, beliefs and philosophies. That includes for IPEF.

### CONTEXT

- ☉ Indigenous approaches to trade embody deeply interconnected relationships between people and with the natural world. We are connected to that world through whakapapa/genealogical relationships and have responsibilities to it as kaitiaki/custodians.
- ☉ Those responsibilities include avoiding risks to the natural and spiritual wellbeing of the ecosystems that keep our lives in balance and have sustained our communities for many generations, and the wellbeing of people themselves.
- ☉ International trade policy and agreements, including rules on agriculture, food and seeds, have direct and indirect impacts on these relationships and the rights and duties associated with them.

### FOOD PRODUCTION AND GENETIC MODIFICATION

- ☉ We acknowledge the plurality of views across Te Ao Māori and for Indigenous Peoples globally.
- ☉ At the same time, important commonalities are recognised and protected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These include reliance of Indigenous Peoples on our traditional food sources and practices to maintain the cultural and spiritual vitality of our communities and the surrounding environments that sustain them.
- ☉ Indigenous food production practices also reject the use of toxic pesticides and other chemicals found in industrial agriculture, which cause respiratory disease, birth defects, adverse impacts to mental wellbeing, severe allergic reactions and other long term health impacts.
- ☉ Within our kaupapa, Ngā Toki Whakarururanga champions the rights of Māori and Indigenous Peoples to maintain and rebuild our food systems and restore *te mauri o te taiao* - the vitality of the environment including its ecosystems and biodiversity.
- ☉ Māori food and beverage producers with whom we work - small and large, community and commercial - combine their commitment to quality and innovation with the duty to maintain those values and practices. *Te Waka Kai Ora* has developed an Indigenous standard and certification system that is based on traditional values and processes for pure food produced without exposure to contaminants like Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).
- ☉ Genetic modification (GM) and the introduction of GMOs threaten Indigenous traditions and ways of life. Globally, many Indigenous Peoples oppose GM because it distorts the essence of being and because it poses risks to local ecosystems, including Indigenous and native plant species.
- ☉ These concerns are not just about contamination of food systems by GMOs and impacts on human health. Unknown long-term effects of GM on the environment and its biodiversity could interfere with the integrity of a native plant variety that may hold cultural significance which undermines their cultural identity; and lead to the destruction of key food sources that are relied on by Indigenous Peoples and threaten traditional agricultural practices, cultural heritage and Indigenous livelihoods.

## POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF IPEF

The IPEF negotiations pose a particular risk to Indigenous food systems across the region.

- ☉ IPEF chapters on agriculture and standards, and associated concepts of science, proof and risk to human, animal or plant life or health are likely to privilege a western worldview where all things in nature are commodities and open to manipulation so as to maximise profit and efficiencies, to the exclusion of Indigenous worldviews.
- ☉ The US is one of the world's largest biotech crop countries planting 71.5 million hectares in 2019<sup>1</sup> and its agritech and biotech corporations are powerful lobbyists who are demanding strong restrictions on governments' ability to regulate GM and GMOs.

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga believes these provisions would cut across the rights, interests, duties and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples throughout the region.

Key issues for Indigenous beliefs, food systems and the environment that could arise from IPEF include:

- ☉ Risks of infringing Indigenous Peoples' right to development, right to preserve and protect species, right to the use and dispersal of species and the right to cultural and spiritual concepts associated with them, as recognised in the UNDRIP.
- ☉ Preventing or impeding the adoption of stronger recognition of Māori rights relating to traditional knowledge and the natural domain that are currently being considered through Te Pae Tawhiti, a process established to advance the protection of Māori rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- ☉ Overriding restrictions on GM and GMOs in Aotearoa New Zealand that currently enable an accommodation between Māori and western worldviews, creating new breaches of Te Tiriti.
- ☉ Standards that are based on western scientific approaches will deny Indigenous knowledge and require proof of narrow concepts of risk and harm to health to justify regulations and protections.
- ☉ Guaranteeing biotech and other agricorporations rights to lobby against existing and proposed law and policies that protect Indigenous peoples rights in the name of "good regulatory practices" or "transparency".
- ☉ Imports of products that have minimum levels of GM or other toxins, including seeds and other agricultural products, may contaminate domestic production, as has occurred in the US, with impacts on Indigenous plants, including those used in rongoā Māori (traditional remedies).

## EFFECTIVE PROTECTIONS IN IPEF MUST ...

- ☉ ensure that Parties retain their domestic policy space, including through a comprehensive carve-out to protect the rights, interests, responsibilities and duties of Indigenous Peoples;
- ☉ ensure that IPEF does not open the door to new rules on biotech and GM or empower biotech corporations to lobby for such changes and against existing laws;
- ☉ enable food to be produced for domestic use and export in ways that accord with Indigenous values, so as to support healthy and secure food for all;
- ☉ support increased resilience of Indigenous food systems and reduce dependence on imports in the agrifood sector, including fertilizers and chemical inputs;
- ☉ go beyond a precautionary principle to recognise knowledge, standards and risk assessments based on Indigenous Peoples' worldviews.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271897/leading-countries-by-acreage-of-genetically-modified-crops/>