



## **GM-FREE IRISH LABEL GOOD FOR BUSINESS**

**Added value, increased market share, better branding and unique selling point: the most credible GM-free food brand in Europe**

DUBLIN — The Government policy to keep Ireland off-limits to GM crops and to introduce a voluntary GM-free food label (1) provides an untapped opportunity for Ireland's farm, food and tourist industries to grow their global market share and secure a unique selling point — the most credible GM-free food brand in Europe, Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland (2) said today.

Among those backing the move at a press conference in Dublin were celebrity TV chefs Richard Corrigan and Darina Allen, the President of Slow Food Ireland; Malcolm Thompson, President of the Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association; the Taste Council Chairman, Evan Doyle, representing also the Organic Trust and Euro-Toques Ireland's 200 chefs; food writers Hugo Arnold and Tom Doorley of the Irish Times; and a visiting scientific expert from the USA, Dr. John Fagan, Chief Scientific Officer of Genetic ID – the world's leading Non-GMO certification company.

Ireland will become the 4<sup>th</sup> EU member state (after Austria, Germany and France) to provide a Government-backed voluntary GM-free label for food and livestock produced with certified Non-GMO ingredients, including beef, dairy, lamb, pork, poultry, farmed fish, cereals, fruit and vegetables.(3)

**Unique selling point: the most credible GM-free food brand in Europe**

Michael O'Callaghan said: "It's a no-brainer: Most EU consumers and retailers want GM-free food; we can produce it more cost-effectively than our competitors. Ireland is a major dairy producer and the biggest beef exporter in the Northern Hemisphere. Our cattle and sheep eat a grass-based diet, with less GM feed than livestock in many other countries. Although unlabelled, most of our poultry - and some of our pork and farmed salmon - is already GM-free. This lead start - along with our world-class beef traceability system, GM-free island status, geographical isolation from contamination by GM pollen, unpolluted topsoil, and clean green image - provides a big untapped competitive advantage for us. Farmers, food producers and tourist operators who choose the voluntary GM-free label and supply chain can transform this advantage into a unique selling point for Ireland: the most credible GM-free food brand in Europe."

**Huge market opportunity**

Market research (4) published today by GM-free Ireland reveals that thousands of EU and USA food brands and retailers offer GM-free product lines as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, Quality Agriculture, Biodiversity, Food Safety, Fair Trade, Sustainable Development and Climate Change strategies. Most EU countries ban GM crops and 260 Regions have GM-free policies.(5) The study reports that Irish farmers have difficulty sourcing GM-free animal feed available to their EU competitors.(6) Irish livestock production still relies on 1.5 million tonnes of imported GM feed (soya meal mostly from South America, and maize gluten, oilseed rape and other by-products of the U.S. beer and agro-fuel industries). GM supplies from the USA are often interrupted by contamination from unapproved varieties. Most of our farm animals eat this GM feed, and the resulting food is sold without a label to inform consumer choice.

**No problem with GM-free supply chain and certification**

Dr. John Fagan of Genetic ID dispelled the feed importers' claims that GM-free animal feed is unavailable or unaffordable. "Production depends on demand. This year, Brazil harvested 28 million tonnes of Non-GMO soy beans, and together with India, has the capacity to produce 35 million tonnes. European maize is 99% GM-free. The extra cost per animal is tiny. The GM-free supply chain is fully segregated; and the certification process is reliable, inexpensive, and simpler than organic. Other countries need to invest in a traceability system for their GM-free production lines, but you have already set this up for beef in Ireland. It's really obvious: Ireland is ideally positioned to become the EU leader in this rapidly emerging market."

**Added value, increased market share and better branding for Ireland — the food island**

The President of the Irish Cattle and Sheepfarmers Association, Malcolm Thomson, said "Competing against countries that can mass-produce cheaper low quality food is race to the bottom. The GM-free Irish label will provide added value, increased market share and a unique brand identity for farmers and livestock exporters who choose to use it. We urge the Government to implement the legislation without delay." Evan Doyle, the Chairman of the Taste Council, pointed out that Euro-Toques Ireland's 200 chefs have always wanted to reassure their customers that the food they serve is GM-free. "This label will provide them with a means to do so. It's a real breakthrough for *Ireland – the food island*."

Darina Allen of Slow Food Ireland concluded with a vision: "Supporting this GM-free policy provides a way for every Irish farmer, food producer and consumer to help co-create a sustainable future for all of us."  
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## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES, SPEAKER INTERVIEWS, PHOTOS**

FD, 12 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Lorraine Lally + 353 (0)87 121 4073 • [lorraine.lally@fd.com](mailto:lorraine.lally@fd.com)

Eugene Hogan +353 (0)87 249 7290 • [eugene.hogan@fd.com](mailto:eugene.hogan@fd.com)

## **VIDEO/ DVD**

A broadcast quality video recording of this press conference will be made available on DVD and online at [www.gmfreeireland.org/videos](http://www.gmfreeireland.org/videos)

## **CONTACT**

For enquiries about GM-free certification, feed and labeling, please contact Michael O'Callaghan, Co-ordinator, GM-free Ireland Network +353 (0)087 799 4761 • [mail@gmfreeireland.org](mailto:mail@gmfreeireland.org) • [www.gmfreeireland.org](http://www.gmfreeireland.org)

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. The Irish Government policy to ban GM crops will still allow the use of imported GM animal feed:

"We support clear labelling and the provision of the fullest information to allow freedom of choice."  
— Statement of Strategy 2005 – 2007, Department of Agriculture and Food.

"The Government will seek to negotiate the establishment of an all-Ireland GMO-free [crop] zone."  
— Programme for Government, June 2007.

The Government will "declare the Republic of Ireland a GM-Free Zone, free from the cultivation of all GM plants... To optimize Ireland's competitive advantage as a GM-free country, we will introduce a voluntary GM-free logo for use in all relevant product labelling and advertising, similar to a scheme recently introduced in Germany."  
— Revised Programme for Government, October 2009.

2. The GM-free Ireland Network has the greatest number and broadest diversity of stakeholder groups of any Non Governmental Organisation on the island of Ireland: [www.gmfreeireland.org](http://www.gmfreeireland.org)
3. The call for an EU GM-free label is backed by the European Parliament ALDE, Green and ESP groups.

*Non-GMO labels, Quality Production and European Regional Agriculture Strategies* is the agenda of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on GM-free Animal Feed, organised by the EU Committee of the Regions on 3-4 February 2010 in Brussels: [www.gmofree-euregions.net](http://www.gmofree-euregions.net)

4. *GM-free production: Forging a unique selling point for Ireland — the food island.* GM-free Ireland Network briefing paper, 17 November 2009. Download PDF: [www.gmfreeireland.org/GMFI-briefing-3.pdf](http://www.gmfreeireland.org/GMFI-briefing-3.pdf)

5. Switzerland has a 5-year moratorium on the commercial cultivation and import of GM crops and animals. The Swiss Guarantee food label forbids the use of GM ingredients and GM animal feed.

22 EU Member states prohibit or restrict the cultivation of GM crops, which are now grown on only 0.06% of arable land in the EU. France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Greece and Luxembourg ban the cultivation of Monsanto's patented MON810 GM maize (the only GM crop authorised for cultivation in the EU). In Italy, 16 of the country's 20 Regions have declared themselves GM-free. Greece bans the cultivation of all GM crops at the local level. Poland's 16 Regions have all declared themselves GM-free. Romania bans the cultivation of GM soy after Monsanto released it there illegally. Serbia bans GM crops and GM animal feed. In the UK, Scotland, Wales and 17 English Counties strongly oppose the cultivation of GM crops. Sweden's entire dairy industry is GM-free.

In 2009, 12 EU Member States (including Ireland) formally requested the EC to recognise the right of every Member State to implement blanket bans on GM crops. The Commission may do so in 2010.

More than 260 EU Regions, over 4,500 municipalities and other local entities (including 19 Local Authorities in Ireland), and tens of thousands of farmers and food producers in Europe have already declared themselves GMO-free, expressing their commitment to prohibit the use of genetically modified organisms for food and farming in their territories: [www.gmo-free-regions.org](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org)

6. For example, France alone imports around 500,000 to 600,000 tonnes of GM-free soy feed annually, (20% to 25% of its total soy needs). This amounts to all of Ireland's annual soy imports. France's leading importer, Agrifeed charges a premium of €25 -27 per tonne in summer, €30 - €32 in winter, for Non-GM soy feed imported weekly via the port of Montoire, near Nantes, in Brittany.