

Tell M&S "No!" to GM animal feed

GM just doesn't fit with Plan A

In April 2013 the Marks and Spencer abandoned its long-standing policy requiring suppliers to use non-GM feed.

What you can do: Write now to Marc Bolland objecting to the change in policy and urging M&S to withdraw from the controversial RTRS. You can send an email below, changing the message to Mr Bolland as you see fit. If you prefer to send a letter to Mr Bolland, the address to use is: Waterside House, 35 North Wharf Road, London W2 1NW, or email marc.bolland@marks-and-spencer.com.

Please send any responses you receive to coordinator@gmfreeze.org so they are aware of any developments in M&S's position. Use Twitter and Facebook to help spread the word.

Points to include:

I am very disappointed by Marks and Spencer's recent move away from non-GM animal feed.

This is a reversal of your previous commitments on GM feed including, "To be clear, we remain wholly committed to our non-GM policy and will continue to only purchase only non-GM soya," Jan/12.

Industrial soya production is not safe, sustainable or ethical. Your company claims, "We see the RTRS (Round Table for Responsible Soya) as an important forum to raise our concerns around the damaging effects of soya production to forests and communities." I would like to know how M&S justifies its continued membership of the RTRS given this is clearly not working.

I'm asking you to reverse the decision to move away from non-GM feed as an interim measure and to urge M&S to move toward removing soya animal feed from its supply chain as swiftly as possible, including by becoming a leader in developing home-grown feed alternatives.

Finally I would like to ask why Marks and Spencer's many Plan A commitments to protecting natural resources, being a fair partner and improving health and wellbeing apparently do not apply to GM soya production and the communities it affects.

Background to this action

In April 2013 Marks & Spencer abandoned its long-standing policy requiring suppliers to use non-GM feed, despite a long, strong and admirable stand on this issue.

In his preface to the 2012 report on how M&S measures up to its Plan A commitments M&S

CEO Marc Bolland wrote:

"We launched Plan A in 2007 to address three global challenges: increasing pressure on our planet's finite resources, rising social inequality, and the need for healthier, more sustainable lifestyles in the developed world."

The move away from non-GM animal feed worsens all three of these "challenges".

As late as April 2012 M&S were responding to customer queries by saying:

"We are the only retailer in the UK to continue to maintain a non-GM policy for all of our food ingredients and animal feed for fresh meat, poultry, farmed fish and standard milk. Our non-GMO feed policy has been in place since 2000 and our food ingredient policy has been in place since 1999. To be clear, we remain wholly committed to our non-GM policy and will continue to only purchase only non-GM soya... We see the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) as an important forum to raise our concerns around the damaging effects of soya production to forests and communities."

Similar statements remained on the M&S website until as late as 12 April 2013.

The UK Government's own data showing consumers want GM out of the food chain entirely. The GM Freeze's GfK/NOP poll showed shoppers are willing to pay more to avoid GM.

M&S claim difficulties in sorting non-GM soya is the reason for their change in policy. But non-GM supplies are available. Most non-GM soya is grown in Brazil. About a quarter of the total soya crop is non-GM, but less than 60% of that is certified, so much more non-GM soya would be able to enter the market. The area of non-GM soya grown in Brazil in 2012/13 was the same as previous years, so the complete shift in policy is unjustified. Long-term contracts for certified non-GM soya for animal feed would enable producers to cover the cost of certification. This is what GM Freeze has urged supermarkets to offer for years. Major European supermarket chains, including Carrefour, have successful labelled lines of non-GM fed animal products. China is moving to secure non-GM soya imports which proves that large quantities of non-GM are on the market. GM Freeze believes that if UK supermarkets place orders for non-GM normal market forces of supply and demand will ensure more non-GM is grown and sold. They need to offer long term contracts.

There is no satisfactory explanation for the change in feed policy by UK supermarkets, and companies' reliance on the widely rejected work of the ISAAA (see our many press releases on this subject) is totally inadequate justification for rejecting consumer demands.

Please take action today to express your dismay at this unnecessary and unwelcome move.