

Australia, New Zealand review GM purple tomato

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Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is seeking public comment on a new application to approve the sale and use of genetically modified (GM) tomato lines, known as the GM Purple Tomato, for human consumption.

The tomato has been genetically modified to include two genes, Del and Ros1-N from the snapdragon plant (*Antirrhinum majus*), enabling it to produce anthocyanins, natural blue pigments that give the fruit its distinctive purple hue, both in skin and flesh. These compounds are also known for their antioxidant properties.

If approved, the GM Purple Tomato would be sold as a whole fresh fruit or used as an ingredient in a variety of processed products, including sun-dried tomatoes and pastes.

Following a thorough safety assessment, FSANZ concluded that the GM tomato poses no public health or safety concerns. "It is as safe as food from conventional tomato varieties," the agency stated.

Dr Sandra Cuthbert, FSANZ CEO, noted that this application marks the sixth GM food assessed through FSANZ's joint regulatory process with Health Canada, designed to streamline approvals while upholding strict safety standards.

"Should the GM Purple Tomato be approved, any food derived from it will be required to be labelled as genetically modified under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, ensuring transparency and informed consumer choice," said Dr Cuthbert.

This application pertains solely to food use in Australia and New Zealand. Commercial cultivation of the GM Purple Tomato in Australia is under separate review by the Gene Technology Regulator. In New Zealand, cultivation would require approval from the Environmental Protection Authority.

Importation of viable seeds into either country remains subject to biosecurity regulations, overseen by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in Australia, and the Ministry for Primary Industries in New Zealand.