# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 960**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 16)**

**Mr M Waters (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) With regard to a certain report (details furnished), (a) on what date was each brand of bread last tested and (b) which brands did not fully comply with ingredients stated on their packaging;

(2) whether any genetically modified ingredients were identified; if so, (a) what genetically modified ingredients and (b) in which brands were they identified;

(3) whether he intends to introduce regulations that would compel all products with any genetically modified ingredients to state so on their packaging?

**NW2114E**

###### REPLY:

1. (a) and (b) The referenced article does not report on a monitoring programme commissioned by the Department of Health. Ingredients that may be in bread are regulated under the Agricultural Products Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990).
2. (a) and (b) The referenced article indicates that the African Centre for Biosafety conducted tests on white bread. The organisation has not shared the report nor their concerns with the Department. The article states that genetically modified soya was found in white bread. This is to be expected as the South African Government (Executive Council comprising eight (8) Departments as prescribed by the Genetically Modified Organisms Act, 1997 (Act No. 15 of 1997) has approved three genetically modified products. These are maize, soya, and cotton.
3. The Department of Health has regulations in place to cover certain aspects of labelling that the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972) mandates the Minister of Health to publish. The Regulations Relating to the Labelling of Foodstuffs Obtained through Certain Techniques of Genetic Modification (R 25 of 2004), requires mandatory labelling for genetically modified foodstuffs that are not substantially equivalent to the non-genetically modified conventional counterpart. Labelling is thus only required for genetically modified foodstuffs when they differ significantly from the conventional counterpart in terms of:
4. Composition, nutritional value, mode of storage, preparation or cooking;
5. If it contains an allergen
6. or if derived from genes of human or animal.

This is in conformance to the joint WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission, the international food labelling and safety standards setting body.

The Africa Centre for Biosafety has been at the forefront of campaigning for general labelling of genetically modified ingredients. The Department of Trade and Industry included provisions for such labelling in the Consumer Protection Act, 2008 (Act No. 68 of 2008). This covers the aspect of “the right to know” and not safety matters as per the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics & Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972), for which the Minister of Health is responsible. The Department of Health is not aware of any undue impact on health from genetically modified food as it participates in the country’s robust internationally bench marked approval system for Genetically Modified Organisms and foodstuffs derived therefrom.

END.