

Ref: 3394936

Dear Ms Thomas

Thank you for your email to Rona Fairhead. I am responding as a member of the Trust Unit which supports the Chairman and the Trustees.

I note your views regarding the recent *Panorama* episode, 'GM Food – Cultivating Food'.

I should explain that the role of the Chairman, and that of the BBC Trust, is distinct from that of the BBC's management and it has no role in day to day editorial decisions, such as the research or reporting on programmes such as *Panorama*. The Trust's role is to set the overall framework, the BBC's Editorial Guidelines, which set out the values and standards that all BBC output should meet. Responsibility for the BBC's editorial content within these Editorial Guidelines rests ultimately with the Director-General, as Editor-in-Chief.

As the Trust is therefore not in a position to involve itself in considering the issues you raise I am forwarding your email to BBC Audience Services so that they can provide you with a response on behalf of the BBC's management.

I hope this may be helpful.

Kind regards

Tom Osborne  
BBC Trust Unit

**From:** Pat Thomas [<mailto:pat@beyond-gm.org>]

**Sent:** 14 July 2015 10:48

**To:** Rona Fairhead - BBC Trust

**Cc:** Trust Enquiries

**Subject:** Survey on BBC reporting and bias

Dear Ms Fairhead,

**How adequately and respectfully are public concerns about genetic modification in food and farming represented by the BBC?**

I am writing to share with you the results of an online survey conducted by Beyond GM about the BBC's treatment of GM issues following the recent *Panorama* programme, *GM Food – Cultivating Fear*.

The headline finding that "70% of all respondents and 64% of the 'middle ground' do not believe that the BBC adequately or respectfully reflects the public's concerns about GMOs" must be of concern to you – as it is to all of us who care about the future of the BBC and its critical role in our society.

Beyond GM recognises the difficulty of reporting complex global issues such as genetic modification in food and farming, in a way that acknowledges the complexity and nuance of the argument.

One of our remits is to help journalists and programme makers improve both their framing of the GM issue and the depth and breadth of their reporting. We are particularly keen to encourage an adequate and respectful representation of the public's concerns, as I am sure you are.

In our view the Panorama programme failed on a number counts to do this and it prompted us to initiate an open survey to discover, amongst other things, what people thought of BBC reporting and what questions the BBC should be asking about this important issue.

The survey results produced a substantial report, which I attach. These showed that far from being fear-driven and uninformed, as the Panorama programme suggested, viewers have serious and legitimate questions about GMOs which are simply not being addressed by the BBC.

It is important to note that whilst the survey was not random, respondents were from both the pro- and anti-GM camps and a significant number were from a "middle ground" that saw both potential benefits and potential harm arising from the technology. We are confident that the results are not out of line with previously published open and random survey results.

Self-selection surveys like this can bring together the views of a more knowledgeable group of people and produce deeper insights than random selection. For this reason, I believe it is important for you to know about and consider the survey's findings and the comments made by the respondents.

I would be happy to meet with you or your staff to discuss this survey, its implications and BBC coverage of GM issues in general.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Yours Sincerely,

**Pat Thomas**

Director

Beyond GM

[www.beyond-gm.org](http://www.beyond-gm.org)

[www.gmfreeme.org](http://www.gmfreeme.org)

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