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WTO challenge may affect GM bans

A complaint lodged with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) could have major implications for Australian moratoriums on genetically modified (GM) crops.

The United States, backed by countries including Canada and Argentina, has launched a case against the European Union

It claims a de facto ban on imports of GM crops is being used as a barrier to trade.

Hayden Milberg, from the US National Corn Growers Association, is confident the WTO will rule in favour of the US.

"The WTO says what you can do is use a science-based system to evaluate what are the impacts of products from biotechnology," he said.

"But as soon as you move to a social system the way the Europeans have, in terms of setting an outright ban on a particular technology that has no adverse impacts on human health and the environment, then we start to move into illegal activities."