

Gene Ethics Media Release 20/4/10

WA Government hid risks to GM-free markets in Europe and Japan

In a letter dated February 26 (attached), three European grain traders tell WA Premier Barnett they will not buy WA grain if GM canola is grown. Barnett and Agriculture Minister Redman hid this letter from the Lower House during the disallowance debate on March 10.

"Redman failed in his duty to mention possible market losses despite asserting that markets are the state's primary responsibility," says Gene Ethics Director Bob Phelps.

"They hid the letter which could have affected the vote that passed approval for GM canola by the slim margin of 26 votes to 24.

"They had a clear duty to disclose the letter's existence and its contents before the disallowance vote.

"When Legislative Councillors debate Giz Watson's disallowance motion and vote in the next few days, they should stand up for GM-free on the basis of the letter and the government's deviousness.

"Adding weight to the European commitment to GM-free is another letter to the Premier sent last week (attached) which renews the commitment of Japanese food co-operatives to buy GM-free canola.

"The Japanese are writing GM-free contracts with South Australian growers, where the government has extended their GM canola ban till 2014.

"In Victoria last season, farmers who produced GM-free canola were paid up to \$15 per tonne more than farmers who grew GM.

"Elders Toepfer and CBH - buyers and marketers of bulk grains - both said they have markets for GM-free in Europe and Japan that would not tolerate GM contaminated supplies.

"As a result, neither company would buy canola from any receipt depot that handled GM.

"We call on the WA parliament to disallow the governments exemption from its GM-free Zone laws, so that commercial Roundup tolerant canola would continue to be prohibited as it is in South Australia and Tasmania.

"The majority of shoppers and farmers want to stay GM-free and the WA government should comply," Mr Phelps concludes.

More comment from:

Bob Phelps

Executive Director

Gene Ethics

Level 2, 60 Leicester St, Carlton 3053 Australia

Tel: 1300 133 868 or 03 9347 4500 {Int Code +613}

Mob: 0449 769 066

Fax: 03 9341 8199

Email: info@geneethics.org

WWW: <http://www.geneethics.org>

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