

Letters on GM in WA

The West Australian – "In Short" 26-8-09

Your report (Put GM to referendum: farmers, 24/8) is a brilliant suggestion. As a consumer I like to choose what food I eat and am not too keen about eating genetically modified/engineered foods. We should be dictated to by one minister or company pushing their own agendas. Politicians must remember they are voted into power by the people and not the corporations.

Of course, corporations have massive power within their lobby groups, but they do not have the power to vote in the politicians. This is achieved only by the general population and this is a crucial fact often forgotten by the politicians once they are in power. A true form of democracy is by referendum and I support it totally.

Emily Wallis, Wembley Downs

Farm Weekly – "Weekly Opinion" 27-8-09

WHILE the "for and against" GM debate has quietened down somewhat, at this stage it is still very much in existence and the GM proponents are obviously working frantically behind the scenes.

Speaking to a Canadian farmer who was staying with a friend in Bindi Bindi recently, he said he grew GM canola but only because it was too difficult to grow straight canola in the face of all the GM activity. He stated that yields were not significantly higher than straight canola, if at all. Weed control was easier at this stage, however, self-sown canola could not be killed the following season with glyphosate.

Growers had to dispose of all seed produced in that season and buy fresh seed each season from the patent holders, at their price of course. In addition, growers had to pay a patent fee of \$34 per hectare grown. It is understood that this fee went on in perpetuity and did not expire as in the case of Plant Breeders Rights in Australia. It is no secret that Monsanto and several other companies aspire to domination of the world grains industry. Monsanto, Bayer and one other company, thought to be Du Pont, sold their research facilities in France and the UK several years ago because of European opposition to GM.

Europe has declared it does not want GM wheat at any price; however, despite this, Monsanto announced some three or four months ago that it was trying to get USA, Canada and Australia to accept GM wheat simultaneously, the idea, of course, being to force Europe into buying GM wheat through having no other options. It must not be forgotten that Monsanto tried to bribe a high ranking Indonesian agricultural official into accepting GM

grain growing in Indonesia some time ago. They picked the wrong mark and it blew up in their faces. Very embarrassing for them. Of course they said it was the fault of their Indonesian agent but it is certain he would not have been acting without instructions from the parent company.

Big business is utterly ruthless and doesn't care who gets hurt. The next step after getting GM accepted would be to get an act passed prohibiting the use of straight seed. There was some publicity which surfaced overseas when this was attempted sometime ago but it is not recalled what plants or grains were involved.

Quite frequently, letters are published in the press, urging growers to insist on having freedom of choice in what they grow. Many of these are written by Monsanto representatives. Growers already have freedom of choice and can grow anything they consider to be to their advantage, within legal limits of course. Once on Monsanto's clutches they would do as they were told or face the legal consequences.

So far, the promised yield benefits from GM canola which have not materialised have been glibly explained away by the excuse that "it was a bad season", or "the season was not suitable". The big companies are targeting all grains not just canola. The same or similar patents and restrictions and subsequent costs to growers would no doubt apply. Whether or not there are dangers in the consumption of GM food studies or if there is a threat to the environment from GM plants, is being hotly debated at this stage.

While this is certainly a most important aspect of the whole GM scene, it comes under the heading of "effects" and diverts attention from what would be the "cause", namely, the situation which would exist if the big companies, such as Monsanto, were to achieve their aims of obtaining patents on all grains grown worldwide. If these can be achieved they most certainly wouldn't be worried about any disadvantages in product consumption or other effects. It would be too late then anyway. Having cotton, soy and canola in many parts of the world under their belt, to name just a few, they are well on their way.

The "3 Ope increase in yield" so often quoted is nothing but the carrot being dangled in front of donkeys. Unfortunately, our own WA Agriculture Minister appears to be going along as a willing dupe. Is it too late now to hope that people are not the asses Monsanto would like them to be?

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