



# NO!GMO Campaign

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Dear Hon. Colin Barnett,

We write to you to express our deep and heartfelt disappointment at the exemption order that allows the commercial cultivation of genetically modified canola in Western Australia. The report on the review of the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act 2003, which was tabled to the parliament in November 2009, recommended that more transparency and public participation should be introduced into the decision-making process when exemptions to allow the cultivation of GM crops were to be granted. The Minister for Agriculture and Food Terry Redman neglected the recommendation and ordered the exemption before the parliamentary session. The letters from Japan which support the recommendation were also neglected.

Minister Redman said commercial trials in WA last year demonstrated successful segregation of GM canola despite 11 "minor incidents" which included canola being blown onto adjacent non-GM crops. The incidents are proof that cross contamination between GM and non-GM canola crops is inevitable.

As we wrote to Minister Redman on January 22nd, we have strong concerns about new data showing that imported GM canola from Canada is growing around ports and near roads in different locations in Japan. The seeds are spread as trucks load and transport the GM canola to food oil factories in spite of the fact that transportation companies and oil factories are taking measures to avoid the spread. A large number of cases illustrate that this is a serious problem that affects local biodiversity. For example, groups of volunteer activists have found wild-growing GM canola as well as GM broccoli, although GM crops are not cultivated in Japan.

As GM broccoli is not commercialized in any country, it is most likely the result of cross-pollination with GM canola. We already have such serious consequences even when we do not plant any GM crops. If you choose to plant GM canola in WA, you can not predict what kind of damage you will have. The Japanese people, who are picking and testing the wild-growing canola around ports and near roads, are trying their best to make sure that the imported GM plants are eliminated so that they do not cause further damage.

The fact that GM plants are appearing in such locations shows that imported GM crops can cross-pollinate with locally grown brassica plants, including Japanese rapeseed varieties, cabbage and even broccoli, which is closely related to canola. If Australian products also include GM material, the insecurity regarding our food will become an even bigger issue in Japan.

In October, 2007, we visited WA and sent a clear message with a petition signed by 155 groups representing 2,900,000 consumers, requesting that you keep the moratorium against GM cultivation. We concluded that since cultivation of GM canola inevitably will lead to GM pollution of the environment, it would become a serious problem for Japanese consumers to continue buying canola products from WA.

It is not only our campaign that strongly opposes GM food in Japan. The general public has a strong

anxiety with regards to GM food. For example, a 2008 opinion poll in Hokkaido showed that 80% of consumers feel anxious about eating GM food. This was the same result as in 2005 in Hokkaido, indicating that the resistance to GM food is constant among consumers in Japan.

In a new awareness survey conducted by MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) released on February 24, 2009, nearly 80% of consumers said they would buy non-GM soy foods even if the price were higher. The percentage of respondents who said they would not want to consume foods that contained GM soy even if they were cheaper were 78.1% for tofu, 77.9% for natto (a fermented soybean food), and 76% for soy sauce and miso (Japan Agricultural Newspaper February 25, 2009).

When we visited WA in October 2007, we were told that Japan has imported large amounts of GM canola from Canada for a long time, and “they don’t care if the food oil is GM-free or not, consumers in Japan are eating GM food oil.” This is not true. Even though Japan has mandatory GM labelling, it is currently only required for some food products, and there is no mandatory GM labelling for food oil. Due to this fact, many consumers are unwillingly and unknowingly eating food oil manufactured with GM ingredients. This was also made clear in the opinion poll in Hokkaido, as mentioned above. We repeat that most consumers in Japan do not want to eat GM food, and when it is properly labeled, we do not buy it.

Consumers in Japan are using canola oil on a daily basis as food oil. If the GM canola is commercially cultivated in WA, we may have to explore sourcing non-GM canola elsewhere. We strongly request that you take this into consideration and maintain the strict policy against GM cultivation in Western Australia.

Sincerely,

Keisuke Amagasa  
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