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### **AM - Calls for Fed Govt to override states on GM laws**

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2008/s2190322.htm>]

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**Reporter: Simon Lauder**

ELIZABETH JACKSON: It's now legal to plant genetically modified canola in much of Australia, but a large group of concerned scientists, nutritionists and doctors is trying to convince the Federal Government to stop the seeds from ever being sown.

700 people have signed a letter to the Prime Minister reminding him of Labor's election promise to only approve GM crops if their safety is assured.

They want the Federal Government to override decisions in Victoria and New South Wales allowing GM canola to be grown and start from scratch, with a complete review of GM safety.

Simon Lauder reports.

SIMON LAUDER: You could say the horses already bolted when it comes to genetically modified canola.

The New South Wales primary industries minister, Ian Macdonald has just announced that it's now legal to grow it in that state.

IAN MACDONALD: There are a large number of farmers who would use the technology if it was available.

SIMON LAUDER: The planting season begins in just weeks, but Adelaide businessman Peter Fenwick is hoping his letter to the Federal Government can stop it.

PETER FENWICK: I'm not, you know, somebody who can be categorised as a greenie or an alternative.

SIMON LAUDER: Peter Fenwick's letter has been endorsed by 700 individuals as well as the Public Health Association. The letter reminds the Prime Minister of Labor's election statement that safe and beneficial standards for GM products must be established beyond reasonable doubt.

The letter says the previous Federal Government set up a biased regulatory regime for GM products.

Epidemiologist and biochemist Doctor Judy Carman says there was no thorough testing of the safety of GM canola before it was approved.

JUDY CARMAN: There's going to be a lot of GM canola about to be planted in the eastern states. And when it's planted and harvested and comes onto Australian tables for Australians to eat in the form of margarine, canola oil, vegetable oil, a lot of baked products and fried products et cetera, it will not have to be labelled.

SIMON LAUDER: Can you say for sure that GM DNA if ingested can harm the health of humans?

JUDY CARMAN: We don't know, because the safety assessments have not been done properly. There have not been any human health studies done on GM crops.

And there have been very few, ultimately, animal studies done on GM crops, and this is one of the problems - our food regulator does not require any animal studies to be done on GM crops.

SIMON LAUDER: Peter Fenwick wants a complete ban on GM products and a review of the approval process.

PETER FENWICK: We believe that as a result of a thorough investigation by a committed government, that the current body of evidence will show that GM foods are not safe beyond reasonable doubt. And in that case we would ask the Government to order an immediate product safety recall on all GM crops, GM foods and GM animal feed and ban their importation into Australia.

SIMON LAUDER: A spokesman for the minister responsible for food safety, Senator Jan McLucas says the Government is considering the issues raised in the letter.

ELIZABETH JACKSON: Simon Lauder with that report.