

MEDIA RELEASE - June 26 2008

GM canola: a headache for grain harvesters and beekeepers

Contract harvesters and apiarists are among the many rural businesses affected by Monsanto's commercial Genetically Manipulated (GM) canola grown at secret sites in NSW and Victoria this winter.

"Beekeepers, grain harvesters and many other rural industries are kept in the dark about GM canola sites but GM contamination would wreck our businesses," says beekeeper Graham Connell of Macedon, Victoria.

"The Victorian and NSW governments that permit GM canola to be grown must set up a public register of all GM sites so we can do our best to avoid GM contamination."

"At the Victorian Apiarists meeting on Friday, I will call for strong laws to protect the beekeeping industry like motions recently passed by NSW Apiarists."

The NSW Apiarists Conference called for GM crop sites to be published and for government to be put on notice that beekeepers will seek compensation if honey sales, markets and product confidence suffer from GM canola.

"Grain harvesters also want GM canola registered as a 'notifiable crop' so that we are officially told where all GM canola is grown," says Rod Gribble of the Australian Grain Harvesters Association NSW.

"AGHA members are advised to gain declarations as to the status of all canola crops & to also gain liability exemption from any action that may result in the spread of GM crop material into any other supply chain or property, before they start harvesting."

"Contract harvesters will not accept any liability or responsibility for any spread or cross contamination of GM crop material that may result in the event of harvesting any crops."

"The NSW and Victorian state governments lifted their GM canola moratoria with no understanding as to the consequences of the inevitable spread of GM crop material & absolutely no interest in understanding this fact so we want the moratorium extended, at least until all the uncertainties are fixed."

"We need to be clear about who will pay if people suffer financial loss from these GM crops," says Graham Mulholland of AGHA Vic.

"Header contractors must be allowed to do our job without fear of being sued."

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"GM crops are a disaster waiting to happen to many rural industries, so governments must again ban GM canola until this mess is sorted out," Mr Mulholland concludes.

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