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**GM canola information blackout continues**

Greens MP Ian Cohen has backed calls from the recent NSW Apiarists Conference for GM crop sites to be published so that beekeepers may stand some chance of avoiding GM contamination of their product and meet market specifications of EU importers.

"Primary producers have a right to know where GM organisms are, particularly if their livelihoods will be affected. Honey exporters are being asked if their product is grown within 5 kilometres of a GM canola crop. They need to know the answer," said Mr Cohen.

A recent federal parliamentary inquiry found that there are "concerns over the introduction of GM crops and their potential impact on the honey sector".

The Inquiry's report entitled: "More Than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries", says the following on GMOs and honey:

The potential presence of GM pollen in natural honey raises real difficulties for honey producers, especially as bees cannot differentiate between GM crops and other plants. There is real potential for GM products to inadvertently enter the food supply through honey bee pollination. This represents a real commercial risk for the industry.[1]

The Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association are concerned about GMOs. Colony Collapse Disorder, CCD, is an epidemic sweeping the bee populations of Europe and America. It has resulted in beekeepers incurring huge losses of stock and reduced production. As yet the cause is unknown however, "GM crops are one of the many suspected risk factors under investigation".

It is expected the Minister for Primary Industry and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries will reject calls from the Australian Grain Harvesters Association and NSW Apiarists for the registration and disclosure of sites growing GM canola crops.

"Commercial cultivation of GM Canola in NSW under the watch of Minister Macdonald has been devoid of transparency and accountability. It has been a betrayal of regional NSW and I expect that "true to form - the Minister will reject the grain harvesters' and beekeepers' calls for appropriate and necessary market information," said Mr Cohen.

Earlier this month Mr Cohen sought documents relating to the Minister's approval of, and his Expert Committee's deliberations on, the approval of GM canola crop varieties for commercial cultivation. This "call for papers" was rejected by the Government.

Releasing the documents would have revealed the directions the Minister gave to the Expert Committee and how those directions affected the advice of the Expert Committee.[2]

Further Information: Ian Cohen: 0409 989 466 or Nic Clyde on 0417 742 754

[1]

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pir/honeybee/report/fullreport.pdf>

[2]

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20080605010>

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