

## **GREENPEACE MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Australian farmers call for extension of GE crop bans**

**Wednesday 6 February 2008:** At a public meeting in the grain growing region of Corowa New South Wales last night, Australian farmers passed a resolution calling for State Governments to extend the moratoria on the commercial growing of genetically engineered (GE) food crops and demanded that the issue be discussed at the Federal Government's 2020 Summit in April 2008.

Over 200 people attended the public meeting to hear Vice President of the Canadian National Farmers Union, Terry Boehm, and grain farmer Arnold Taylor speak frankly on Canada's experience of commercially growing GE canola.

At a press conference at Parliament House in Melbourne this morning, the Canadians addressed issues such as seed control, liability and segregation of GE and non-GE crops which failed in Canada after a few years - resulting in the collapse of the non-GE and organic canola industries.

Against the interests of other states, both the New South Wales and Victorian Governments recently announced they will lift their bans on GE food crops. South Australia is also pending a decision. GE canola is the first GE food crop approved for commercial release in Australia and state bans have prevented planting till now.

Vice President of the Canadian National Farmers Union, Terry Boehm said, "Whatever Canadian farmers have saved by simplified weed control has been taken away by increased costs in seed and the additional technology use fees. Since the introduction of GE canola in Canada, seed prices have risen drastically and corporate control over farmers is tighter than ever before. There are constant threats of litigation to the extent that farmers are complying with company conditions disallowing them from saving seed rather than using their own because they are scared of being sued."

The introduction of GE canola in Canada has resulted in extensive litigation, both by biotech companies suing for patent infringement and by farmers suing for the loss of their GE-free marketing advantage. Mr Taylor, Chair of the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund, has been involved in a legal battle with Monsanto and Bayer CropScience on GE canola contamination since 2001. As in Canada, under Australian common law, non-GE farmers will have little legal recourse when the inevitable contamination does occur.

GE canola is grown only in Northern United States and Canada. Australia is the only other country considering to introduce the crop. Farmers in Canada rejected the proposed commercialisation of GE wheat and GE flax due to the experience of contamination and loss of markets from GE canola.

Michelle Sheather, Greenpeace's Genetic Engineering Campaign Coordinator said, "Following Canada's experience, the New South Wales and Victorian governments should reverse their decisions and extend the GE food crop bans for at least 5 years. State Governments should also introduce liability legislation, to protect farmers and consumers from unwanted GE contamination," concluded Ms Sheather.

The Farmers will tour Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and rural canola growing areas in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

For more information on farmers tour visit:

[http://sites.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/get\\_active2.html?activityid=71](http://sites.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/get_active2.html?activityid=71)

<http://www.truefood.org.au>

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