

## Vox pop

Premier John Brumby has announced that drought-tolerant GM wheat developed in Victoria returned yields up to 20 per cent higher than regular crops. The Mail-Times asked Wimmera residents how they felt about eating GM food.



**KERRY HILL**  
Natimuk

I don't think it's good. I probably wouldn't eat it, I try not to.



**MEGAN BOLDT**  
Stawell

I think it's really bad, food is not supposed to be modified, it's supposed to be natural. You could be allergic to the stuff they put in it.



**HEATHER**  
**MANWARING**  
Horsham

I think there could be some health issues. I don't think they should have it. They would have lots of chemicals.



**COLLEEN**  
**ELDRIDGE**  
Horsham

It could have a long-term effect but it's hard to judge what will happen in the future. Hopefully they will do more research into it.

## Miracle crops

SIR: AFTER the enthusiasm note the proviso: these miracle crops will 'require many years of research and assessment before they could be considered for commercial use'. In other words, it's all pie in the sky.

The proponents of GM crops are always keen to convince us that the miracle is just

around the corner. But what is lurking around the corner is an environmental disaster, with all our crops contaminated and unsaleable, as concerned scientists and concerned farmers warn us.

What we need are farmers that understand their trade and can produce nutritious and safe crops under difficult conditions by listening to soil experts and environmental scientists.

**Dr Peter Hill**  
Broulee, NSW

## GM wheat

SIR: THE Premier John Brumby falsely claims — Crop Earnings Praise, Mail-Times June 18 — that genetically modified drought-tolerant wheat will solve farmers' problems with global climate change.

Mr Brumby is a fan of big technology, so his science advisers and the GM industry misinform him.

Scientists everywhere have tried for 25 years to create GM drought-tolerant plants but failed. Splicing the genes for complex traits is impossible with crude GM techniques. Techni-

cal problems and farmer opposition made Monsanto cancel its GM wheat program in 2004. So Mr Brumby's GM bandwagon is set to fail.

Despite Australian rejection of GM crops and foods, Mr Brumby regularly joins the 20,000 delegates at biotech conferences put on by the Biotechnology Industry Organisation, BIO, USA.

Why? The Office of the Premier of Victoria, Mr Brumby, and the Victorian and Queensland governments, are full members of BIO — see [www.bio.org](http://www.bio.org) — that promotes GM techniques and GM products world-wide.

Mr Brumby's job has prospects. Former Queensland Premier Peter Beattie now gets an annual retainer of \$250,000 as the Queensland Government's trade ambassador in the USA, to promote GM.

What does John Brumby's future hold?

**Bob Phelps**  
Gene Ethics, Carlton

## Toxic wheat

SIR: WHY do we need harmful, toxic GM wheat when natural plant breeding is already producing drought-tolerant varieties? — Crop Earnings Praise, Mail-Times June 18.

GM wheat will be shown to be just as toxic as the CSIRO's abandoned GM pea if it is ever subjected to rigorous, independent testing.

It's impossible for the current crude, random and genetically damaging technologies used in DNA manipulation to create a correct and safe genetic structure between different species — if such a structure even exists.

The GM manipulation process can cause massive changes in the natural functioning of a plant's DNA. Native genes can be mutated, deleted, permanently turned off or on, and hundreds may change their levels of expression.

The transgene can become truncated, fragmented, mixed with other genes, inverted or multiplied, and the GM protein produced may have unintended attributes with harmful side effects.

Of course, the GM industry is doing everything possible to avoid discussing these facts.

**Ian Yaretsky**  
Caulfield North