



For Immediate Release: 13 May 2011

“Who’s the GM Bully?”

The GM industry is trying to paint organic farmer Steve Marsh as some kind of bully because he is suing his neighbour who contaminated him by growing GM canola. Steve Marsh lost his organic status as a result of the GM contamination and suffered income loss. His farm may remain contaminated for years.

Fran Murrell of MADGE asks “Who’s the GM bully?”

“This situation needs to be examined. The neighbour, Mr Baxter, we are told, has a weed problem and so wants to grow GM canola. Mr Baxter has a range of options to deal with his weeds including different rotations, different chemicals and various land management practices. He can grow an entire range of non-GM crops all of which have a market. GM canola is priced at a discount of \$50 compared to non-GM canola so if Mr Baxter decides to grow non-GM canola he will be better off at the silo.”

“In contrast Mr Marsh is an organic farmer. He cannot supply any crops or produce that is contaminated by GM. This means that the contamination by Mr Baxter has removed his opportunity to farm in the way that he and his customers want.”

“When GM was introduced it was under the mantra of choice and in Victoria we were told that it would benefit organic crops. In fact I went to the International GM Co-existence Conference in Melbourne in November 2009¹. There it was clear that GM contaminates and the contamination only increases over time. From the beginning it was clear that farmers and the public were being told that none of their choices would be removed but that this was wrong.”

“Organic has always meant zero tolerance for GM. GM was not introduced by saying “we need to change organic standards to allow for contamination”. We were told our choices would remain but that farmers would have a beneficial GM crop. We were told a lie and it was known to be a lie at the time GM canola was allowed to be grown. The organic canola crop in Canada is restricted to the remote area of Prince Edward Island. The seed stocks were contaminated by GM within 3 years of the uncontrolled release of GM canola.”

“We need to think, who are the bullies?”

- The government who allows the release of GM canola although they have been told it will contaminate other farmers and cause the loss of organic certification?
- The government who leaves the only remedy open to affected farmers as the courts where they have to sue their neighbours?
- Monsanto who develops a crop that it knows will contaminate and who pressures for the adoption of that crop where there is public opposition?

- Monsanto who knows that farmers' pockets are shallow and that they want to be farming and not in court?
- Monsanto who has developed herbicide tolerant crops that have caused both a massive increase in pesticide usage and an epidemic of uncontrollable weeds? “

“It is clear that Mr Baxter, by growing GM canola, acted in a way that directly caused loss to his neighbour. Instead of stopping planting GM canola while the issue is being sorted out he rubs salt in the wound by doubling the amount of GM canola he will grow and so will pollute many more farmers in the district. Who's the bully here?”

Contact: Fran Murrell 0401 407 944

Backup: Madeleine Love 0447 762 284

ⁱ MADGE Overview of 2009 International GM Coexistence Conference
<http://www.madge.org.au/Docs/overview-coexistence-conference.pdf>