

GM: Truth modified more than genetics

Network of Concerned Farmers www.non-gm-farmers.com

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In a world first and with a surprising lack of fanfare, a detailed cross industry information paper on GM canola has been released. The report ⁽¹⁾ is a culmination of over two year's debate between members of the West Australian Ministerial GMO Industry Reference Group incorporating the views of 14 representatives representing all sides of the GM debate⁽²⁾. The Network of Concerned Farmers (NCF), an active member of this committee claims that it disproves much of the current misinformation supporting GM crops and proves that there are major flaws in the coexistence plans to segregate GM and non-GM canola.

"This report proves that the GM truth has been modified more than the genetics." said Julie Newman, NCF National Spokesperson.

"Economically and agronomically, GM canola does not offer a benefit to farmers but risks are very real,"

The committee analysed trial data that has been used to support GM crops and found that, despite non-GM yields being affected by inadequate weed control, if technology access fees were included, there would be "no financial advantage in using the Roundup Ready treatment." ⁽³⁾

The greatest agronomic limitation of GM crops identified is the lack of residual weed control and the requirement for additional chemicals for residual grass control prior to emergence. The information paper explains how Roundup Ready canola can only be sprayed with glyphosate from the two to the six leaf stage and why control of wild radish and wild turnip will not be possible after this stage. ⁽⁴⁾

"A key finding proves no GM is accepted in non-GM. ⁽⁵⁾ WA coexistence trials are designed to fail as they are to test incompetent protocols designed to accept GM contamination rather than prevent it ⁽⁶⁾. This is a serious issue considering 90% of WA's 2008/09 exports was exported to GM-sensitive European Union. ⁽⁷⁾

"Minister Redman was advised of this issue well before these GM trials were planted and yet he chose to ignore the facts and ignore this report." ⁽⁸⁾

Unresolved legal issues have been identified in the report and by the Upper House who voted against the GM trial approval. This included unfair costs and liabilities imposed on non-GM growers and the possibility that non-GM farmers may be required to pay for contamination that they could not avoid. ⁽⁹⁾ The information paper also identifies unresolved health issues and the

inability for consumers to avoid GM through labelling as GM canola is not labelled and a non-GM label is not possible.⁽¹⁰⁾

"It appears that this report is being deliberately hushed up as it exposes the truth that GM canola is proven to be all about hype and high risk."

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References:

1. Report available at:

http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/OBJTWR/imported_assets/content/food/Ministerial_GMO_Industry_Reference_GM_Canola.pdf

With the following amendments approved but not yet inserted: Pg. 14: In average long term GRDC NVT trials, early season TT canola varieties (1982kg/ha) out-yield conventional (1417kg/ha), hybrids (1513kg/ha), clearfield (1386kg/ha) and clearfield hybrids (1360kg/ha) by an average of 39.67percent and mid season TT canola varieties (1,643kg/ha) were out-yielded by conventional (2191kg/ha), hybrids (2176kg/ha), clearfield (2146kg/ha) by an average of 32.13 percent. (Graph 2.1).

2. Ministerial GMO Industry Reference Group and Ministerial GMO Specialist Advisory Panel: http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/PC_91991.html?s=1665006087

Chaired by Kim Chance (Minister for Agriculture prior to recent election). Representatives: Western Australian Farmers Federation, Co-Operative Bulk Handling Ltd, Operations Division, Co-Operative Bulk Handling Ltd, Marketing, Edstar Genetics Pty Ltd, The Farming Community (Producers Forum), Organic Farming Systems Bio Farmers, Network of Concerned Farmers, Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Agriculture Food, WA, Murdoch University, The University of Western Australia, AWB Limited, Conservation Council of Western Australia and the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

3. Economics:

Pg. 21/22. Pratley report (common research used to support GM crops): "...due to inadequate weed control, broadleaves were not adequately controlled in non-GM herbicide tolerant varieties and grasses were not controlled in triazine tolerant varieties, which would lead to yield reduction."..."Including technology access fees resulted in no financial advantage in using the Roundup Ready treatment. Including the technology access fee of \$75.94/ha the gross margin in year one of the triazine tolerant treatment was \$45/ha higher and \$12/ha higher over the four year rotation compared to Roundup Ready treatment."

Pg. 23. Table 3.2 2008 costs: If growing 100ha GM canola yielding 1.4t/ha, an additional 9.7% increase in yield is needed to cover costs. If growing 500ha GM canola yielding 0.7t/ha, an additional 15% increase in yield is needed to cover costs. (*Note costs have increased considerably for 2009 season.)

Pg. 37 "If volunteers are not controlled, they may appear in the following crop. This may result in GM canola being detected in cereal crops (e.g. wheat and barley). If the produce is required for GM sensitive markets, cereals may need to be graded at outturn to remove canola from cereals. This additional cost could range from \$2 to \$10/tonne."

Pg. 23: "In addition to expenditure relating to technology user agreements and seed premium, the cost of volunteer control, compliance with resistance management plans, segregation, identify preservation through the supply chain, any discount on market returns and any negative environmental risks should also be brought to account."

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4. Agronomics:

Pg 19 "Glyphosate herbicide can only be applied to Roundup Ready canola from the two to six leaf stage. Weeds that germinate after the six leaf stage in a Roundup Ready canola crop can be controlled by selective weed control; however, wild radish and wild turnip control options are not available after this stage."

Pg. 17: The greatest limitation of herbicides use in combination with GM canola is their lack of residual weed control. Both triazine and imidazolinone, the chemicals used on non-GM herbicide-tolerant crops, have a residual weed control. Both the herbicides used on GM crops, glufosinate ammonium and glyphosate do not have a residual control and while the chemicals will kill weeds that come in contact with the chemical, it will not control weeds that continue to germinate after spraying. If using glyphosate or glufosinate ammonium on weeds known for multiple germinations, it is necessary to either use multiple chemical applications or delay spraying until as much as possible of the weed population have germinated. However, any delay of uncontrolled weed growth for early germinating weeds will lead to crop losses and yield penalties. A weed management strategy includes multiple chemical applications, additional residual herbicides and/or mechanical weed control prior to sowing. It is for this reason that the application of trifluralin is required in order to control grasses on emergence."

Pg. 37 "While volunteer canola is currently only a minor problem in agricultural areas within Western Australia and other states, glyphosate tolerant canola could become a problem as glyphosate is the most commonly used knock-down herbicide in the agricultural industry."

5. Zero tolerance:

Pg. 32 "In 2001 The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission made it clear that a GM-free claim left no room for ambiguity under the Current Trade Practices Act. GM-free means no detectable GM." To " ... EU Member States that have legislation in place that strictly regulate positive claims for non-GM products and no detectable GM content is allowed." And pg. 68 and 76.

6. Coexistence protocols

Pg. 30: "...the responsibility will remain with the non-GM farmer to minimise or prevent contamination if a neighbouring crop is GM. Monsanto's Crop Management Plan recommends that non-GM farmers adopt "appropriate management strategies as communicated by the supply chain for the specified product". The communication from the supply chain as to the specific details required by Australian non GM farmers to meet non-GM market specifications is that a guarantee of no GM is required."

Pg. 33 "The rationale for establishing thresholds is because inadvertent presence is considered unavoidable."

Pg. 31 "Due to these contractual obligations and liabilities involved, it is essential for farmers to know the GM content of their seed prior to delivery to avoid costs and liabilities. Unfortunately, there are no quantitative tests available at the delivery site."

7. Markets.

Pg. 49 Table 5.7. Pg. 50 "... in 2008/09 this market (Japan) took 9 per cent of Western Australian canola exports while the European Union accounted for 90 per cent."

8. State Government won't act on GM report.

<http://www.abc.net.au:80/rural/wa/content/m1748596.ram>

Quote by Minister Redman: "It's not one I'll be formally responding to." "Not going to be something we will be using as a key bit of information in our decisions on GM."

9. Law:

Pg. 75 "Farmers growing GM crops, contract harvesters and transport operators may be held liable under common law for trespass, nuisance or negligence."

Pg. 76 "...as yet there are no established levels of GM content that results in a deduction of royalties for patent use, it is up to the discretion of the companies concerned."

Pg. 77 "The experience of end-point royalty collection of GM soy in Brazil has resulted in non-GM growers paying royalties if a positive test is registered. This implies the trigger for deduction of royalties is set at the level of sensitivity of the tests used which can easily be reached due to accidental contamination."

10. Health

Pg. 60. "... Under existing protocols, consumers will be denied the choice to avoid GM products."

Pg. 66 "GM canola was approved for commercial release without any long-term feeding trials performed on GM canola oil. The remaining meal escapes regulation as meal is used for stock feed and FSANZ has no authority over stock feed. The results of Roundup Ready canola fed to stock compared to non-GM canola meal showed an increase in liver weights of up to 17 per cent after a few weeks feeding trial. This was claimed to be due to an increase in glycosylates and was not investigated further."