

Submission Cover Sheet

Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

Submission Number: 177

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Date Received: 17 August 2007

Number of Pages: 2

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GM CANOLA REVIEW

1. The economic impacts on Victoria of the moratorium on GM canola are

- That Victoria has been in a position to exploit its clean green image of agriculture on both the domestic and export markets.
- It has meant that the fastest growing agricultural industry, that is the organic and biodynamic industry, has been able to increase its market share and continue as an environmentally sound industry.
- Farm viability has improved during hard times as non GM canola has attracted a premium of \$120 a tonne (ABARE 2007).
- Export canola has not been threatened by contamination.
- Grain contractors have not had the added cost of cleaning of harvesting and sowing equipment which may have been contaminated by GE seed.
- There has been no additional costs to agriculture for segregating crops during growing, processing and transportation of canola crops.
- The Government has not had to use valuable resources and money to enforce regulations.

2. The economic impact if the moratorium were to expire would be

- To increase overall farm costs to ensure segregation of GM and non GM crops.
- Transportation costs of crops would increase to prevent contamination of both domestic and export produce.
- The destruction of the organic/biodynamic industry, an industry which has addressed many of the environmental problems facing Australia today such as soil acidity, low soil carbon, excess water use, disease and low fertility in livestock. It has also improved the economic viability of farms as farmers take advantage of premium prices for organic produce.
- Increase the need for and cost of more weed control for farmers and local councils with the cross pollination of Roundup tolerant canola with wild brassica species.
- Increase cost to farmers of paying the GE companies for seed as farmers will not own their own seed.
- Farmers will lose out on a premium for non GE canola.
- The increased cost to farmers and communities to control the spread of GM canola. Already non GM canola is one of the most common weed species in grain growing areas. This is very evident in spring as the yellow flowerheads of canola adorn thousands of kilometres of roadsides and train lines .
- The legal cost to farmers from the contamination of crops and seed supplies.

- The cost of testing for GM contamination of crops.

- The honey industry could be affected due to the effect of GE crops on the bees.

3. Extending the moratorium

- Would ensure farmers retain an economic advantage over countries which grow GM canola.

- It would mean the continued development of the organic industry in Victoria increasing the economic advantage of an environmentally sound agriculture which is consumer driven.

- An extended moratorium would give more time to evaluate the economic impact of a GM industry in Australia. Overseas data at the moment would suggest that the promised benefits of higher productivity, drought tolerance etc are just not happening. As part of that economic assessment it is very important to assess the environmental impacts and the effect this technology has on health as both effect the economic viability of Victorian communities and time is needed for a full independent assessment.

4. I strongly recommend that the moratorium on GM canola be extended to ensure that Victorian agriculture is not compromised in any way. Nobody can guarantee that contamination will not occur, therefore, there will be no choice for farmers and this will have disasterous consequences for agriculture in Victoria.

I find it totally irresponsible that any government should embrace this technology.

Robyn Grant,