

Victorian Government Response to the GM Canola Review Panel's Recommendations

In May 2004, the Victorian Government introduced a four-year moratorium on the cultivation of InVigor® and Roundup Ready® GM canola. The moratorium is due to expire on the 29th of February 2008.

As the next step in the Government's careful and considered approach to the use of gene technology, in May 2007 the Government announced a review of the GM canola moratorium by an independent panel, chaired by Sir Gustav Nossal.

The Government welcomes the Panel's report, *Review of the moratorium on genetically modified canola in Victoria* and thanks the Panel for its hard work and dedication in undertaking this important inquiry.

The report provides a clear and comprehensive assessment of the economic impacts of the moratorium on Victoria, and the impacts of extending the moratorium or allowing it to expire.

The Government has carefully considered the Panel's recommendations and has decided not to extend the moratorium on the commercial cultivation of GM canola in Victoria.

The Government's response to each of the Panel's recommendations is presented below:

Recommendation 1

The Panel recommends that the Victorian Government allow the moratorium on genetically modified canola to expire.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

The moratorium order will be allowed to expire on 29 February 2008 and will not be replaced by any further order restricting the commercial cultivation of GM canola.

Recommendation 2

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government allow the market to determine whether segregation of non- genetically modified canola from genetically modified canola in the grain supply chain is required.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

As there is no apparent market failure in relation to segregation to meet customer requirements, there is no case for Government to intervene. Grain, including canola, is routinely segregated in the grain supply chain, across which the costs of segregation are distributed.

Tolerance levels for GM material in non-GM canola were agreed by Primary Industries Ministerial Council in late 2005 and provide a sound basis for the coexistence of GM and non-GM in the grains supply chain.

Recommendation 3

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government support the national adoption of the Single Vision Grains Australia initiative, to ensure that any industry self-regulatory approach to coexistence is national in scope.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

This is consistent with Government's position presented to the Primary Industries Standing Committee and proposed to be presented to Primary Industries Ministerial Council at its next meeting.

Victoria is an advocate for the industry self-regulatory approach described in the draft Single Vision Grains Australia initiative and believes it should be adopted nationally to ensure that any coexistence strategy is national in scope.

Recommendation 4

The Panel recommends the *Control of Genetically Modified Crops Act 2004 (Vic.)* be reviewed to assess its ongoing impact on investment in plant breeding.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

A review of the *Control of Genetically Modified Crops Act 2004* will be undertaken to assess its ongoing impact on investment in plant breeding.

Recommendation 5

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with the organic sector to identify barriers to and opportunities for growth.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

The Government, through Regional Development Victoria and the Department of Primary Industries, will continue to work with the organic sector to identify barriers and seek opportunities for growth.

Recommendation 6

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with governments to ensure that there is appropriate monitoring and in particular:

- encourage the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to monitor the impact of genetically modified canola on health and environmental safety, and ABARE and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to monitor the extent and impact of genetically modified canola on the Australian and Victorian economies
- encourage the Primary Industries Ministerial Council to facilitate a coordinated approach to the monitoring and managing of herbicide resistance nationally and regionally to ensure ongoing diversity in cropping systems.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

Other governments will be approached through Primary Industries Ministerial Council to ensure that there is appropriate monitoring of the commercial cultivation of GM canola, and to ensure that the appropriate government agencies, such as OGTR, ABARE and ABS are encouraged in this regard.

In any approach to the OGTR to monitor the impact of GM canola on health and environmental safety, it will be noted that a condition of the licences issued to Monsanto and Bayer CropScience for the general (commercial) release of their approved GM canola lines, specifies that they are to provide an annual report to the OGTR in which they must identify any adverse impacts or unintended effects of GM canola on health and the environment, as well as reporting the volumes of the GMO grown.

Additionally, the Victorian Government will work through appropriate channels to encourage the Primary Industries Ministerial Council to facilitate a coordinated approach to the monitoring and managing of herbicide resistance nationally and regionally to ensure ongoing diversity in cropping systems.

Recommendation 7

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with the Governments of South Australia and New South Wales to harmonise GM crops regulatory arrangements for genetically modified crops, in particular to achieve a consistent approach to deregulating the moratoria on cultivation of genetically modified canola.

Response

The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.

The Victorian Government will approach the Governments of South Australia and New South Wales and seek to harmonise GM crops regulatory arrangements for the cultivation of GM canola.