

Submission Cover Sheet

Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

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Name of Individual/Organisation: Arthur Bowman

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Independent Review Submission
August 2007

Arthur Bowman
"Arrowbinia" Molong NSW 2866
Member Network of Concerned Farmers
Chairman Molong District Council NSW Farmers
Committee Member Biotechnology Taskforce NSW Farmers

Sir

I submit this paper in support of the extension to the current State moratoria for three years.

Discussion paper.

Farming Investment, Marketing, Co-existence, Liability, Comment and Direction.

Our Business Farming Background

Our family have been growing rape canola and monola since 1984 in that time we have found the benefit of a break crop in rotation with wheat has been very successful. Our production of canola would be six hundred tonnes per annum depending on rotation. We also contract sow and harvest canola in the district. The return from canola represents 50% of our grain income.

Investment to Australian Canola Producers.

We have compared the value of GM production against our conventional non GM canola and believe the gain being one single trait offered herbicide resistance to glyphosate. This single trait would not be benefit our farming practise. Glyphosate already used as a pre emergent, with two additional sprayings would be overuse of this important chemical. Further use would only increase the resistance we are already experiencing. We are also very concerned that the loss of this cheap safe product would be a major cost with farmers having to use more potent chemical mixes at higher costs. Glyphosate is one third the price of the original chemical when it was under patent to Monsanto. This alone demonstrates the value of this chemical to the future of farming.

The benefit of further State protection will allow time for trials to prove the benefit if any of GM canola. Where are the answers the Biotech Companies talk about. Trials have continued for many years. But all have been done in secret. We the farmers have not been given any results from canola trials run in Australia. Why are the Companies so reluctant to give farmers the results. Our business depends on knowing or doing gross margins.

Marketing.

Exporters of Australian canola and wheat have supported the moratorium saying the consumers are not willing to accept GM in food. "Removing the moratorium or allowing the act to expire." would immediately see Australia as a GM market.

International customers that buy 82% of Canada's wheat crop say that they will stop buying if Canada introduces GM wheat. Customers have been clear about GM production in food this must be recognized.

The moratoria as it stands can protect our GM free clean green image valued by many of our competitors in world markets.

Australia has the advantage being the only exporting country of GM free canola in the world. This allows us to sell without the competition from our biggest competitors Canada and the USA. This market advantage has given us a premium over GM canola.

Canada as our major competitor on world markets has moved from a \$70 advantage in 1998 when they were growing for non GM markets to a discounted price of \$60 - \$70 p tonne for GM on today's market compared to GM free Australia. (Information taken from media statement by Kim Chance MLC WA 6th Oct 2006)

Australian canola has an eager world market which accepts our total production. The loss of this market to our small family business would be \$37,000 per annum.

The USA and Canada have not commercialised GM wheat because of market resistance this should be a lesson to Australia.

Co-existence

Coexistence between GE and non GE canola is not an option as **segregation** is impossible. Australian research (Reiger study 2002) shows contamination of non-GE crops by GE crops at distances up to three kilometers.

Co-existence and choice has been promised by government and industry but there is no intention to deliver it. Every farmer that has viewed the detail is aware that the "coexistence" procedure proposed would be too onerous for the non-GM grower to comply with. Very little detail has been given to industry regarding the path to market for a non-GM product, but those non-GM growers who have investigated the proposal do not approve of the plans proposed. One major problem that there is no testing available for under 0.5% on farm or at receival sites. All growers would be forced to market as GM.

Superweeds Cost to Farmers

Cross pollination with common family species such as mustard and wild radish is inevitable and creates herbicide resistant superweeds, as outlined in scientific studies done in the UK and Canada.

Liability Issues between Farmers

The inability of farmers to contain GE canola production within their boundaries will lead to lawsuits between farmers and farmers and the biotechnology companies. This is occurring in Canada and America. (Seeds of Doubt Report, Ch 7, pp 25). There is no legal framework in place to protect Australian farmers who elect not to grow GE canola. The W.A. Farmers have moved a motion to put the responsibility and liability back to the owners of the GM technology. This is only fair and reasonable. We do not want to accept the responsibility.

As a contractor, we have had to harvest both canola and monola during the same season. The problems and cost associated with the cleaning of harvesting equipment between paddocks and the fact that we could not give a guarantee of hygiene between the two similar species would add to the difficulties of preventing contamination. When asking my clients if I could contract on their properties after a GE canola crop, the answer was **definitely not**.

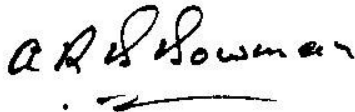
The Australian Grains Harvesting Association has estimated an increase in liability costs of 40% for harvesters, with the introduction of GE canola and an inability to guarantee "GE free" equipment to non-GE growers.

Comment and Direction

Australians farmers are not ready for the commercial introduction of GM canola and we do not want to be forced to grow a product that has many other questions to be answered. I believe the push by the Federal Government giving information not related to canola is misleading farmers who do not want a product that has no agronomic or financial benefit. The data promoted by those with a vested interest has ignored the issues presented by both farmers and consumers. The financial benefits remain with Multinational companies owning the seed and chemical with farmers committed to paying the additional costs.

The NSW Farmers has also been influenced by the Associations Biotechnology Taskforce with the committee chairman a seed producer, representatives from Agrifood Awareness Australia , NSW DPI Science and Research, CSIRO, NSW Farmer Association members and myself Arthur Bowman as a canola grower representative. Unfortunately this advisory committee has been non functional since my nomination to the committee by the President in September 2006. I believe this committee does not represent the views of main stream farmers in this state and unfortunately has not been productive for the benefit of farmers in NSW.

Australian farmers need positive answers before a commercial release of GM canola in NSW and the only way is National Variety Trials with current TT and conventional varieties under the restriction of a moratorium with published results.



Arthur Bowman