

Submission Cover Sheet

Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

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Attachments Submitted with this Submission:

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Dear Panellists

I was a farmer for 5 years in Yea in the late seventies producing vealers and stud sheep, before moving to a farm at Anderson near Wonthaggi. On retirement, I bought a small farm near Daylesford and this year leased some flats to a young couple to grow organic vegetables for local restaurants and regional farmers' markets. Their produce was of a very high quality which suited the many niche gourmet restaurants which abound in the Macedon Ranges and Spa Country region. Daylesford has more day visits than any other tourist attraction in Victoria after the Casino. It is the gem in the tourism crown of regional Victoria. I intend to develop my farm as a community supported agriculture venture, which is now popular in the U.S., and continue to use my land to grow high quality organic produce to supply our established and growing local tourism industry, thereby encouraging regional employment and the local economy and reducing the travel miles from spade to blade, lessening transport costs and greenhouse emissions. How do I assess the value of these benefits to the economy in my submission to you? And I am just one of many.

There are a lot of organic farms on the magnificent red volcanic soils around Ballarat, and some organic beef producers, wineries and a goats cheese dairy in our area all producing for niche markets which supply this local tourism industry. One herb grower in the Western District grows organic rosemary herbs for export and rosemary stems to be used to flavour shaslick sticks for BBQ's. They are prime examples of farmers being innovative and developing niche markets to replace their former conventional markets displaced by the globalisation of agriculture, a strategy which can only be applauded and supported as the future of agriculture in a global warming world. We are all concerned that lifting the moratorium on GE canola and, following this precedent, allowing other GE crops as they are developed, may affect our organic status and local and overseas markets so carefully nurtured.

As I drive between Daylesford and Ballarat, I see feral canola plants in the middle of oat crops and on the roadside, along with wild turnip and other species capable of being cross-pollinated by GM canola to become herbicide resistant once GM canola becomes widespread. The size of the seeds ensure that GM canola seed will be widely distributed along rural roadsides during transport.

I spent some time recently on the Bellarine Peninsula and was appalled at the sheer number of canola plants on the roadside, with one even growing in a crack in the concrete overpass on the four-lane Geelong-Melbourne road in the middle of Geelong

city. Driving from Daylesford to Melbourne I see canola along the roadside beside the Lerderderg River. How will it be controlled in the Lerderderg Gorge State Park and at what cost? What cost to Councils and D.N.R.E. of keeping our roads and parks clear of canola when it becomes resistant to the normal safer herbicides now used? I can't quantify these costs for you but they will be considerable and rising.

You have been handed an awe-full responsibility, in reviewing whether to lift the moratorium and allow the release of GM canola into the hands of farmers. Are you not being asked to assess something that is, at the present time, unknown and hence unquantifiable and, therefore, cannot accurately be assessed?

I remember some 30 plus years ago being offered a new product by our stock agent. It was a pellet that could be inserted in our calves' ears which would promote faster growth. My hip pocket nerve said "Go for it." My gut instinct told me not to use them. Something did not seem right. The gut does not lie, so I followed my gut.

I was interested to read in The Age soon afterwards, that butchers in the U.S. seemed to be producing significantly more babies of one sex than another, I can't remember which sex it was. I couldn't help but wonder if it could be anything to do with the widespread use of the hormone pellets I'd just been offered, as butchers would be likely to eat a lot of red meat.

I fully support the incredible genetically engineered medical innovations in curing disease and disabilities, that are now being developed. But these are in a controlled environment. As we are now finding deformities in all sorts of freshwater aquatic life due to the amount of hormones humans are excreting which find their way into our waterways, it seems to me that we play a risky game when we release unnatural substances into the environment.

I have the same gut instinct about the release of GM canola into the wider environment at this time. We may be able to quantify some of the costs and benefits but there are likely to be many more costs which we do not yet know about and which therefore cannot be costed and taken into account in your review at this time. Are you not being asked to take on trust that there will be no more unforeseen deleterious outcomes? Are you being asked to play God without having his omniscience to ensure that you do not make a dreadful mistake? As Macbeth, or was it Lady Macbeth, said after the murder of Duncan: "What's done cannot be undone."

I therefore recommend extending the moratorium until 2013 to watch developments in agriculture and markets both locally and globally in the light of the challenge of global warming. With some UK supermarkets now labelling products with stickers indicating that they have travelled long food miles, how will this change consumer choices and our markets in future?

I would like you to refer to your hearts and gut instinct as you make your decision. "A good heart and a good mind – these are what you need to be a chief," Louis Farmer, an Elder of the Onondaga tribe in North America, is quoted as saying. And I would like you to consider the following statement

made by a friend after watching a TV documentary on greed and the western world's addiction to consumerism :

“As a species, we're going to be brought down by the quid.”

With the GM companies lobbying governments and hoping to gain control of the world seed and therefore food supply, he may be right. I hope not.

I am now going to include a lot of arguments against allowing the moratorium to expire to indicate that I have informed myself about the issue.

1. The economic impacts of the bans on commercial gene manipulated (GM) canola were very positive. Australia's GM-free food supply meant:

- premiums of up to A\$120/tonne for GM-free canola abroad (ABARE, 2007);
- no chronic GM contamination problems in export shipments;
- no added segregation, identity preservation or shipping costs needed for GM canola;
- competitive advantage in global canola markets as the only GM-free canola trader;
- high shopper confidence in the quality of our food supply;
- we saw that most GM crops are stalled eg: the area of GM canola globally stalled in 1999 (ISAAA, 2007).

2. If the GM canola ban expires we would have the higher costs of:

- testing, identity preservation, segregation, handling, rejected shipments, some lost markets and lower confidence in Australia's clean, green, GM-free reputation for all foods;
- herbicide tolerant weeds (wild radish, turnip, charlock, ryegrass and barnyard grass) by outcrossing, from Roundup and Basta tolerant GM canola and from repeated use of these chemicals. Weed costs are borne by everyone - local councils, parks authorities, landcare groups, farmers, gardeners, etc.
- more pathogens in GM canola that need more spraying;
- farmers and shoppers would pay Bayer and Monsanto (EU, 2006);
- more monopoly ownership and control of chemicals and seeds;
- ensuring organic, biodynamic and conventional foods labelled GM-free were still available.

3. Extending the commercial GM canola ban would mean Australia could:

- continue to sell all foods into any market, often at premium prices;
- keep its competitive advantage over GM growers in North and South America. They often sell grain for animal feed and ethanol, not direct human consumption, for which they suffer a price penalty;
- continue to develop GM-free conventional and organic foods.

4. The moratorium on commercial GM canola should be extended until 2013, at least, because:

- no other GM crops being researched could be available in the next five years. Promises of healthier foods, drought and salt tolerant crops, longer shelf life food, etc. are just hopeful promises (Glover 2005, in Corish 2005).
- over 80% of the world's canola production, in 20 countries, is GM-free. Only Canada and the USA grow GM herbicide tolerant canola and production has not increased since 1999;
- only three countries sold canola in world markets in 2006 - Canada 70%; USA 11%; Australia 19%. Australia is the only GM-free seller so we accessed all markets and got premiums of up to A\$120 (ABARE) over the past two years. We should keep our competitive advantage;
- an EU economic report shows Bayer and Monsanto benefit most from GM crops and foods. Food is not any cheaper!

An RIRDC report on GM canola by Anderson and Jackson says:

"Hence net economic welfare for Australia would be US\$28 million per year higher as a result of GM adoption, less any negative value domestic consumers place on not knowing if they may be consuming GM products. With the EU moratorium, the net economic welfare benefit to Australian producers and consumers of GM adoption in this case is estimated to be US\$15 million per year. While that is \$13 million less than if there is no EU moratorium, it still represents a net gain from joining the adopters of GM varieties of these four crops even if the EU moratorium remains in place. **However, the average Australian farm household income would decrease with GM adoption - even with rice and wheat included - if the EU moratorium remains.** ... Even then, several States of Australia have continued to delay approval because they perceive insufficient economic

benefit from GM crops to warrant the cost of the necessary co-existence system (which will fall more on non-GM producers, the smaller the share of GM varieties in total output) and the expected loss that would result from a downgrading of their status as a 'clean, green, safe food' supplier domestically and abroad."

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this vital decision about our future with which you have been charged.

Yours faithfully

Dallas Kinnear