

Submission Cover Sheet

# Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

**Submission Number: 10**

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**Attachments Submitted with this Submission:**

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Submission from Nancy Millis

I believe the time is now appropriate for the State of Victoria to lift the current ban on the growing of approved GM crops in this State.

The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and the Food Standards of Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) have both spent considerable time and thought analysing the data relative to the safety and environmental impacts of GM crops, and canola is the first approved for commercial release, following years of experimental field trials.

Their considered judgement is that the safety for biota and the environment of approved GM plants are not substantially different from their conventionally bred counterparts and, in any case, these issues are excluded from the Panel's terms of reference.

This leaves consideration of economic and social matters as they relate to the large scale planting of GM food crops

#### Social Issues

There is a small (but vocal) sector of the public that does not wish to eat GM food. This choice must be respected and can be handled by segregating GM-free food produce, labelling it GM-free, and passing the cost of these processes to those who wish to make this choice. This is now accepted practice for free-range chicken and eggs, "organic" fruit, vegetables etc.

#### Economic issues

The claim is made that overseas markets for Australian produce will be prejudiced if they contain GM material. The data from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Rural Economics (ABARE) do not support this view and the GM canola, maize and soy beans imported extensively into China and Japan, for example, are paid no premium for GM-free status, except for very small quantities of GM-free produce imported to niche markets in Japan.

For several years, Australians have been eating products (passed by FSANZ) which contain ingredients derived from GM crops – particularly canola, cotton, maize and soya bean.

There has been no evidence of harm or ill health resulting from the consumption of these products. I know of no data that suggest that in Australia, products like corn chips and biscuits labelled as containing a GM ingredient have been withdrawn because they caused harm or failed to sell.

I believe that a GM food crop plant (once passed by OGTR and FSANZ for commercial release) should not then be subject to restriction by the Victorian government as there is no evidence of market disadvantage. The criterion should require that the plant is highly unlikely to cause harm to people, livestock, water, the environment or the cycling of nutrients. Then, farmers should have the right to choose whether to grow an approved GM crop; in addition, many GM constructs provide significant environmental benefits.

The prohibition in Victoria of the commercial production of GM canola flies in the face of reliable data and Victoria's stated claim to be the premier biotechnology State in the nation.

Nancy J. Meisel  
7/8/2008