

Submission Cover Sheet

# Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

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**Attachments Submitted with this Submission:**

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GM Canola Reveiw Panel Secretariat  
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GM Canola Review Panel

Dear Sir or Madam:

As a Victorian dairy farmer I have taken a proactive attitude to my industry since the total deregulation of our industry in the very late 1990's. I have been an active member of my local branch of the UDV (United Dairyfarmers Victoria) since deregulation. I operate a certified Agrade Biodynamic dairy farm in the Goulburn Valley near Kyabram and supply Parmalate, Bendigo for a niche Biodynamic fresh milk line sold in Coles supermarkets through-out the country.

My background is important because in 2001 I was nominated to attend a Biotech forum at Melbourne Uni. Hosted by the dairy industry, chaired by our UDV President of the time. The panel consisted of one of our leading co-op directors and other distinguished members mainly of Biotechnology Australia's choosing.

It was a very pro GMO technology forum that openly discussed the problem of public perception and the backlash that had been felt on the introduction in the US and EU. At the conclusion of the panels delivery there was a very robust question and answer session that made it clear that milk companies and grain traders from around the country were reluctant to embrace this technology based on their experience of canvassing and surveying their consumer base. National Foods and the Western Australian Wheat growers association were two groups that identified themselves through their representatives present that clearly raised market concern.

Now, as a BD farmer of course I have a philosophical view of all things as natural as possible or practical. But I feel I am also a realist.

GMO grains were readying to be released through the process of OGTR and there was a great effort put in to make this process transparent. To my surprise very few dairy farmers knew that much about GM grain or what it might mean to them. At that stage quite a few of the dairy companies hadn't dissected the potential logistical problems that having a GM plant release could have on their farm raw milk supply.

Because of markets both international and local that were demanding GMO free milk. Perception demanded a GMO free diet to the milking cow, later to be in some circles watered down to 95% GMO free. This lead to submissions coming from the factories to enact the original moratorium to give themselves time to prepare better for a release that could be avoided through QA's and NVD's from grain growers to dairy farmers.

Hence the phrase co-existence was born and is the premise on which the industry believes it can manage the system going into the future. Leading to a vote from a poorly supported UDV conference in June of this year to support an introduction based on co-existence protocols.

I would like you to look very closely at those protocols and delve into the process that took place when they were first developed. The reason being that a committee was set up by the Grains Council of the VFF as part of its push for GM Canola release back in 2003. The committee was chaired by Mr Bob Waters and was to be represented by all

that had a part to play in the growing , harvesting, cartage ie the whole loop to the end consumer. The dairy industry was never invited to have a representative on that committee but the main problem was that the harvesters and cartage, contractors have never agreed that the protocols are likely to be effective and refused to attend after only two meetings. The protocols were written by staff of the VFF Grain Group and circulated to serve a purpose rather than have any real chance of being effective.

In 2004 I was one of a five man sub committee of the UDV that looked into the introduction of GMO feed into the dairy cows diet. The grain manufacturers were represented by a presentation from Ridleys and indicated that it would cost \$25 per tonne to introduce low risk Identity Preservation (IP) management and \$65 to introduce the highest form of IP if the dairy industry demanded that service.

Last year through the very low water allocation situation that the Goulburn Valley region had to manage. There was a lot of Canola crops that were not finished sufficiently for grain production that was cut for hay and feed to dairy herds successfully filling a diet gap and getting a return for the grain grower that other wise would not have been ~~un~~ viable. If climate change predictions are to be believed and I believe they are, then that will always be an option in seasons that get crops started but don't quite finish them off adequate for grain harvest. This will be cut off if co-existence is not achieved. We will loose a valuable cross commodity flexibility. Because those cows fed that diet would be outside the 5% threshold that is in the loosest factory QA requirements, remembering that many companies require 1% to 0% for complete GMO free compliance.

Other grain crops that may become Genetically Manipulated to support a particular weed spray system, that no doubt will look to follow Canola into the Australian agricultural landscape, will further destroy our opportunity to maintain a credible integrity of the GMO food production system that I believe we in Australia have.

Co-existence is the biggest question that needs to be considered by your panel because most people in the agricultural industry that will be effected by that process of getting the crop from farm to product does not believe that co-existence will maintain the integrity of a GMO free claim that being truly GMO free does.

I understand that the Australian Barley Board and other grain marketing organizations still support the moratorium. I would also like to suggest that spin offs such as our calf meat market that is wholly going into baby food for the international market from at least one abattoir in Victoria could come under threat as with our chopper cow markets that enjoy the worlds best reputation for clean green product along with NZ.

It is for these reasons that I still believe that remaining cautious and extending the moratorium will be in the best short to medium term interests for Victorian farmers. I can confidently say that that decision would upset very few grassroots farmers that have a cynical view of GMO technology and will not be lining up to take up the technology anyhow.

Perception demands consideration, marketing GM free is our most profitable tool.

Greg Pell  
Dairyfarmer, Merrigum, Victoria.

