

Submission Cover Sheet

Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

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Name of Individual/Organisation: Penny Hendy

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Attachments Submitted with this Submission:

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(03) 9658 4874 or (03) 9658 4871

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Dear Review Panel

Termination of Victorian GM Moratorium

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express my view regarding the Victorian GM Moratorium.

It is unfortunate that some Australians can see little merit in the GM canola under consideration. There may be a vague understanding of it being useful for farmers in weed control, but this is insufficient to enlist their support. The fact that it will lead to a reduction in the quantity of chemicals applied should excite a lot of people, but unbelievably, the sector of our community most vocal in such matters, seems to have had their minds poisoned by fear-mongering, purposely distorted information, and a media enjoying a feeding frenzy.

So here we are, ten years after the development of this useful product, having to justify why we should be allowed to grow it. How far ahead can our competitors get in a decade? These are the very same competitors who also enjoy generous financial support from their governments in the form of subsidies and hand outs. Many Australian farmers are asking themselves ... “**why** do we bother?!”

On the 7th August 2007, Agrifood Awareness of Australia (AFAA) released a report entitled ‘Delivering Market Choice With GM Canola’. I quote the first page as I think it is an excellent summary of requirements:

‘There are three key elements in the delivery of market choice:

Ø the ability of any supply chain participant to source product that meets a pre-determined set of specifications

Ø the ability of any supply chain participant to supply product that meets a pre-determined set of specifications

Ø the ability of any supply chain participant to manage their area of the production, processing, manufacturing and delivery of product to a pre-determined set of specifications.

The work undertaken through SVGA[1] confirms the grains industry supply chain’s ability to deliver these market choice requirements through the combination of commercial protocols, processes and practices that are either already in place, or are ready to be put in place (Attachment 1).

The implementation of these supply chain systems provide the capacity for industry to maintain or enhance trade in Australian grains and their products, and operate in an open and transparent manner.’

As a seed producer I am very familiar with these concepts, and I know such systems work. Australian seed for export needs to meet the stringent specifications of the OECD, ensuring the genetic purity of the product ... starting with careful selection and recording of the source, and continuing with avoidance of contamination by other seed at every stage. The system also guarantees truthfulness in labeling. There is an exacting quality assurance process which is followed, and is regulated by several authorities, both international (OECD and International Seed Testing Authority), and domestic (the Australian Seed Authority, and the Seed Industry Code of Practice). Our company produces, processes, retails and delivers, therefore we have a good understanding of the whole supply chain, and we have been well able to conform to all the requirements at every stage for over 50 years.

As the 'Delivering Market Choice With GM Canola' report indicates, market resistance to the new technology is disappearing in the face of increased confidence brought about by better knowledge. Our competitors enjoy the benefits of the new technology (in this case through reduced costs of production), and the product finds a ready market. That is, our competition spends less money in producing canola, this increases their profit, and makes them more viable for the long term.

In comparison to our competitors, Australian farmers have a tough environment and an unpredictable climate to cope with. With still painful memories of last year's drought, drought resistant plants will be welcome, and salt tolerant plants will be valuable in many communities. At last plant breeders have tools to develop plants with specific characteristics which can really help. Many good plants are in the pipeline now. But what good will they ever be, if they're never permitted to be grown? Are we really so insane?

I see the GM moratoria as bars to the window of opportunity. Let's remove these bars and grant Australian farmers the opportunity to access technology to keep up with their competitors, overcome climatic and environmental restrictions, increase their profitability, and continue to be vital contributors to the economy.

Yours sincerely

Penny Hendy
Victorian seed producer and grain farmer.

PS As for other legislation which may be required when the moratorium is lifted, I recommend that vandalism of GM crops should be made illegal. Vandalism is a criminal act, and should carry appropriate penalties, at least ensuring the reimbursement of damages.

[1] Single Vision Grains Australia