

Submission Cover Sheet

Review of the Moratorium on GM Canola

Submission Number: 202

Name of Individual/Organisation: Mairi Neil

Date Received: 10 August 2007

Number of Pages: 2

Attachments Submitted with this Submission:

To obtain copies of these attachments please call the Review Panel Secretariat on
(03) 9658 4874 or (03) 9658 4871

GM Canola Review Panel Secretariat
Department of Primary Industries
Level 19, 1 Spring Street
GPO Box 4440
Melbourne VIC 3001

Friday, 10 August 2007

Dear Panel,

Australia's GM-free food supply means premiums of up to A\$120/tonne for GM-free canola abroad (ABARE, 2007). There is no chronic GM contamination problems in export shipments and no added segregation, identity preservation or shipping costs needed for GM canola. Australia has competitive advantage in global canola markets as the only GM-free canola trader and more importantly, there is high shopper confidence in the quality of our food supply. Most GM crops are stalled eg: the area of GM canola globally stalled in 1999 (ISAAA, 2007).

If the GM canola ban expires there will be higher costs of testing, identity preservation, segregation and handling. There will be rejected shipments, some lost markets and lower confidence in Australia's clean, green, GM-free reputation for foods.

There will be higher costs of herbicide tolerant weeds (wild radish, turnip, charlock, rye grass 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 and even home gardeners.

There are more pathogens in GM canola that need more spraying therefore it will be farmers and shoppers paying Bayer and Monsanto (EU, 2006). This increase in monopoly ownership and control of chemicals and seeds is appalling and frightening. There are many examples of environmental damage and havoc caused by irresponsible and greedy corporate companies – their driving criteria is profit, not community well-being, or even the advancement of humankind - unless it is tied to the pursuit of the dollar!

There will be a higher cost ensuring organic, biodynamic and conventional foods labelled GM-free are still available. Whereas extending the commercial GM canola ban would mean Australia could continue to sell all foods to any market, often at premium prices. We could keep our 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. Australia should continue to develop GM-free conventional and organic foods because there is an increase in public awareness and demand for a sustainable unpolluted future.

Please extend the moratorium on commercial GM canola until 2013 at least, because no other GM crops currently researched will be available in the next five years. Promises of healthier foods, drought and salt tolerant crops and longer shelf life food 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 for the ordinary consumer, which is what should be our priority!

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."

Please think of our children's future – why should they inherit a contaminated food chain and be prisoner to giant corporate companies like Bayer and Monsanto? There are already instances of species of bees and butterflies and other creatures wiped out because of GM plants – how can that be a benefit?

Yours sincerely,

Mairi Neil