

GM Canola

Consumers' fact sheet



The use of gene technology to produce new varieties of agricultural crops has been adopted widely throughout the world.

There are currently 12 varieties of genetically modified (GM) crops available world-wide which are commercially grown and used in the production of food and animal feeds:

- canola*
- potato*
- cotton*
- soybean*
- corn*
- flax/linseed
- chicory
- squash
- melon (cantaloupe)
- sugar beet
- papaya
- tomato

* Derivatives have been approved for use in food for human consumption in Australia.

The growing of certain varieties of herbicide tolerant GM canola in Australia has been approved by the federal Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR). The OGTR is responsible for assessing risks posed to human health and the environment from GM crops.

The OGTR has carried out detailed risk assessments and found Roundup Ready® and InVigor® GM canola is as safe for humans and the environment as conventional canola.

All food containing genetically modified ingredients is also subject to a scientific risk assessment by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) before being permitted to be sold or added to food for sale in Australia.

FSANZ has approved oil from (OGTR) approved GM canola plants for sale as a food product in Australia, having concluded it is as safe and wholesome as oil from other commercial canola varieties.

Any food product with more than one per cent GM material must list this on the product label. For unpackaged food, this information must be displayed for consumers to read where the food is displayed for sale. For food to be labelled "GM free" it must not contain any GM ingredients.

For more information visit:

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) at www.ogtr.gov.au

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) at www.foodstandards.gov.au

Further details of the GM canola review process, the Review Panel's report, and the Victorian Government's response can be found on the website of the Department of Primary Industries at www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

Moratorium review - findings

The Victorian Government's four-year moratorium on the cultivation of InVigor® and Roundup Ready® GM canola was allowed to expire on 29 February 2008.

The decision was made by the Government following an independent review of the moratorium by three eminent Victorians: Sir Gustav Nossal (Chair), Christine Forster, and Merna Curnow. The review panel made seven recommendations all of which were supported by the Government.

Review Panel recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government allow the moratorium on genetically modified canola to expire.

Recommendation 2

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government allow the market to determine whether segregation of non genetically modified canola from genetically modified canola in the grain supply chain is required.

Recommendation 3

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government support the national adoption of the Single Vision Grains Australia initiative, to ensure that any industry self-regulatory approach to coexistence is national in scope.

Recommendation 4

The Panel recommends the Control of Genetically Modified Crops Act 2004 (Vic.) be reviewed to assess its ongoing impact on investment in plant breeding.

Recommendation 5

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with the organics sector to identify barriers to and opportunities for growth.

Recommendation 6

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with governments to ensure there is appropriate monitoring and in particular:

- encourage the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to monitor the impact of genetically modified canola on health and environmental safety, and ABARE and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to monitor the extent and impact of genetically modified canola on the Australian and Victorian economies
- encourage the Primary Industries Ministerial Council to facilitate a coordinated approach to the monitoring and management of herbicide resistance nationally and regionally to ensure ongoing diversity in cropping systems.

Recommendation 7

The Panel recommends the Victorian Government work with the governments of South Australia and New South Wales to harmonise regulatory arrangements for genetically modified crops, particularly to achieve a consistent approach to deregulating the moratoria on the cultivation of genetically modified canola.

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