

# GM Canola

## Review Summary



The Victorian Government's four-year moratorium on the commercial cultivation of genetically modified (GM) canola was allowed to expire on 29 February 2008.

The moratorium was originally imposed due to concerns about the potential impacts on markets and trade from the commercial cultivation of GM canola in the State. It followed a decision in 2003 by the Federal Gene Technology Regulator to approve RoundupReady® and InVigor® GM canola for commercial cultivation (the Federal Government is responsible for assessing risks to human health and the environment posed by GM organisms).

The decision to allow Victoria's moratorium on GM canola to expire was made by the Victorian Government following an independent review and assessment of the economic impact of the four-year GM canola moratorium and possible impact if extended; and the economic impact and risks to market and trade if the moratorium was allowed to expire.

### Key findings from the independent review of the moratorium

The independent Review Panel, chaired by Sir Gustav Nossal found:

- No evidence to suggest a market or price advantage for Australian canola due to its non-genetically modified status. Important export markets such as the European Union (EU) and Japan now accept GM canola.
- The organics sector continues to rapidly grow in countries where GM crops have been extensively commercialised.
- The potential direct benefits for farmers from the adoption of GM canola include increased yields and reduced on-farm

costs as a result of less tillage and herbicide applications. Additional flow-on environmental benefits associated with reduced tillage practices include improved soil structure and soil health and the option to use herbicides with a lower environmental impact.

- That by allowing GM canola crops to be grown in Victoria, it is estimated there will be a direct benefit of \$110 to \$115 million generated for the Victorian economy over the next eight years and a positive impact on private sector investment in agricultural science in Victoria.

### GM canola crops

The grains industry has developed a range of protocols to manage and govern the introduction of GM canola. These protocols have been designed to ensure that GM and non-GM canola can coexist throughout the supply chain. The grains industry in Australia already successfully segregates commodities and provides, for example, more than 50 segregated wheat products to its markets.

The grains industry protocols will ensure Australia can continue to meet the market requirements for canola for even the most demanding markets, such as Japan and the EU. The choice to grow approved GM canola will be left up to the farmer, who will be able to choose the most appropriate crop and cropping system to suit their business.

Due to the limited amount of GM canola seed available, the 2008 season will consist of a limited commercial release of Roundup Ready® in Victoria and NSW, accounting for around 1-2 per cent of the total canola crop. GM canola should be available to all farmers by 2010.

## 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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