

NEWS MEDIA RELEASE Tuesday 17 April 2012

Call for SA to stay GM-free

Adelaide — Last night an overflow crowd of over 130 people gathered in the Box Factory Community Centre to explore the topic “Why GM-free SA?” Seven panellists discussed many aspects of genetic manipulation (GM) technology and its products, then answered searching questions posed by the audience.

At the end of the meeting, a motion to keep the SA moratorium on GM crops was unanimously adopted by the audience. The motion read:

“The citizens and residents of South Australia gathered here fully support the maintenance of South Australia as a GM-free crop zone. We applaud the public commitment of the Australian Labor Party, the South Australian Greens and the Liberal party to keep the GM crop moratorium in force until September 1, 2019.”

Liberal MP for Unley, David Pisoni, and Greens MLC Mark Parnell both reconfirmed their parties’ commitment to keeping the GM crop moratorium after the next election in 2014. Agriculture Minister Gail Gago was unavailable to attend but had recommitted to GM-free policies. Mr Parnell outlined his Bill for a law to Protect Farmers from GM contamination.

Other panellists were Senator Nick Xenophon, health researcher Associate Professor Judy Carman, plant breeder Dr Phil Davies, farmer Geoffrey Carracher and community advocate Fran Murrell of MADGE (Mothers are Demystifying Genetic Engineering).

Each speaker clarified diverse parts of the topic, from their own expertise and experience.

For instance, Geoffrey Carracher highlighted that GM canola grown in WA, Vic and NSW suffers a discount of up to \$60 a tonne and that South Australian canola growers enjoy a valuable competitive advantage. A recent Birchip Cropping Group report had also found that GM seed yielded no more than other varieties. Their gross margin analysis found that due to the GM price discount, GM seed royalties, expensive brand-name chemicals, and extra transport costs, GM canola was up to \$150 per hectare less profitable for farmers than other canola options. “Many farmers have tried GM but will not grow it again because it failed to live up to its promises,” Mr Carracher said.

The meeting raised \$400 to support West Australian farmer Steve Marsh whose organic certification was revoked when GM canola blew onto his farm. His case is in the WA Supreme Court, seeking compensation. SAGFIN (SA Genetic Food Information Network) that organised the event also collected \$400 to support their GM-free education activities.

More comment: Bob Phelps 0449 769 066 or 03 9347 4500