



60 Leicester St Carlton Vic 3053 Australia  
 E: [info@geneethics.org](mailto:info@geneethics.org) W: [www.geneethics.org](http://www.geneethics.org)  
 T: 03 9347 4500 {Int +613} or 1300 133 868 F: 03 9340 5102

## GM canola bans: unresolved threshold issues

**State and territory bans on GM food crops, including canola, should be extended for at least five years. Further research and policy development is essential to resolve various threshold issues before the bans could be lifted. These include:**

- **A consensus among state, territory and commonwealth governments is essential.** The proper forum for reaching such agreements under the national uniform system is the Gene technology Ministerial Council. No government or governments should lift GM bans without the agreement of all others as acting alone would commit the whole nation to GM. Canola seed and pollen would cross state boundaries and cannot be contained. The West Australian and Tasmanian governments will extend their bans to protect markets for clean, green GM-free foods. (Note: in the Gene Technology Act review, Victoria and NSW backed a national uniform approach to GM marketing issues. They must act accordingly).
- **The Primary Industries Ministerial Council** was directed in April 2006 to create a segregation, coexistence and identity preservation system by the end of 2007 for public review and adoption by the whole food industry and the community. Yet no mandatory system for testing, identity preservation, segregation, transport and handling exists.
- **A public GM Register of all commercial GM sites would be required** so that GM-free growers, apiarists, harvesters and others could avoid these locations, to protect their products and markets
- **All the additional costs resulting from GM would be borne by the GM companies and their licensees.** The higher costs of seed certification, testing, crushing, cleaning farm machinery, identity preservation, segregation, grading equipment, transport, storage silos and labeling must be met by the gene technology companies, and not passed on to GM-free farmers, the food industry or shoppers;
- **Implement strictly enforceable herbicide and weed management systems** to ensure the costly management problems of herbicide tolerant weeds do not increase. More weeds are likely as a result of pollen transfer to canola's weedy relatives – wild radish, turnip and charlock – or selection pressure from the repeated use of Roundup and Basta herbicides. If the GM companies and GM farmers are not held responsible, all land managers – local government, parks managers, farmers - and the public generally will pay. The loss of Roundup as an effective weed management tool would be a costly disaster and no other comparably effective herbicides are under development.
- **Require National Variety Trials** to compare all aspects of agronomic, environmental and safety performance of GM canola with the best conventional varieties. Bayer and Monsanto have until now refused to submit any seed of their approved GM varieties for these trials. The design, conduct and results of the trials must independent and the results public. The public must be enabled to participate in deciding these matters.

- **Require the OGTR to review all new evidence** on the health, safety and environmental impacts of GM that has been produced since licences for GM canola were issued in 2002.
- **Fully label all the products of GM canola**, including animal feed. Only full labeling will allow GM-free farmers to choose what to feed their animals and to meet their contractual obligations. The presence of any GM product must also be disclosed to shoppers on food labels. Labelling must be clear and specific if any GM product is in food or feed! Over 90% of Australians have always wanted this.
- **Guarantee that non-GM varieties of canola seed continue to be available** in perpetuity to farmers who want to buy and grow it.
- **The end point royalties on grains and oilseeds must be set in advance.** Bayer and Monsanto would levy these fees at the silo.
- **The % of GM contamination in a GM-free grower's canola that would trigger an end point royalty claim** must be specified in advance as GM-free growers will deliver into the same facilities.
- **Specify the allocation of promised GM canola benefits** in advance, between the GM companies, the growers, handlers, marketers and shoppers. In North America, 94% of benefits from GM canola accrued to GM seed and agrochemical companies for the first five years. It is now 70%. The price of food has not fallen (EU, 2006);
- **Any additional costs to seed cleaning, grain harvester or transport businesses** must be met by GM seed owners.
- **Insurance Brokers to confirm** they will underwrite non-GM farmers' claims if their GM-free crop is contaminated with GM material and they suffer market loss. Cover should also be available for claims against GM farmer when their crop contaminates a neighbour.
- **A strict liability regime** for any GM contamination of conventional or organic cropping systems, supply chains or export shipments, with the technology owners and their licensed users responsible to pay for any market loss from their product.
- **Discrepancies to be resolved, between the various forward estimates of promised benefits from GM canola.** ABARE projects \$3 billion over ten years, Norton and Roush claim \$157 million per year, while Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation project \$28 million per annum, reduced to \$15 million if the EU keeps its bans, and major losses if costs blow out or markets are lost. They can't all be right and these guesstimates must be reconciled.

**Lifting the bans on GM canola without these threshold issues being resolved will create havoc in Australian farming, food supply and marketing systems. The market can resolve these key questions only in favour of GM companies. The minority of farmers who would choose to grow GM will take away everyone else's choice. A recent Stock and Land survey found just 26.7% of farmers want GM. The vast majority of shoppers want GM-free but without full labeling our choice has already been removed.**