

Gene Ethics

News media Release - May 13, 2008

ABARE pushes GM crops with phony stats

"The latest ABARE modelling exercise "Economic Impacts of GM crops in Australia" http://www.abareconomics.com/publications_html/news/news/news.html uses false assumptions and fantasies to back Genetically Manipulated (GM) crops," says Gene Ethics Executive Director, Bob Phelps.

"The GM gravy train only exists for Monsanto (the world's biggest commercial seed company) and Bayer (the biggest agrichemical company) who will laugh all the way to bank with ABARE cheering them on.

"Agriculture Minister Tony Burke must abandon the Howard Government's mantra that GM crops will be a magic cure for all the ills of Australian farms beset by systemic problems that GM will make worse.

"ABARE's media ploy aims to pressure the WA and SA governments into approving Monsanto's herbicide tolerant GM canola, over the objections of most farmers, food processors and shoppers who know there are only risks and hazards with GM.

"For the first five years of GM canola in North America, the GM companies got 94% of the benefits - technology fees, dearer seed and expensive chemicals - while farmers got 6% and food prices did not fall at all. (EU Economic analysis, 12/06)

"ABARE's fantasy scenario assumes that GM wheat and rice exist but they don't.

"A more evidence-based economic analysis by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (2005) said: ... **'the average Australian farm household income would decrease with GM adoption - even with rice and wheat included - if the EU moratorium remains.'**

"The European bans on GM food still remain and are getting stronger all the time," Phelps says.

RIRDC also said: '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.

"The astronomical numbers that ABARE claims will come from GM are just freaky fantasies that no-one should believe.

"ABARE figures are grossly skewed by ignoring the high present value of Australia's GM-free conventional canola crop for which we can earn premiums in Europe and Asia.

"ABARE counts the projected value of GM crops as a total GM benefit, not just the value of the claimed productivity increases.

"This statistical sleight of hand discredits a government organisation that should be impartial but seems to be influenced by industry connections and political agendas.

"ABARE even boosts the illusion that GM crops are a 'significant proportion of the world's broadacre crop output' but GM crops cover less than 1.4% of the world's productive land - 8,558,470,155 hectares. (See: for instance: <http://www.tranquileye.com/clock/>)

"ABARE also asks us to believe in the fairies when they claim: 'Over the longer term, other broadacre GM crops may also be available for adoption by Australian farmers.'

"That's a big maybe! In 1996, Monsanto released the first GM soy, corn, canola and cotton in the USA. The plants contained two traits - Bt insect toxin and herbicide tolerance. Today, Monsanto still has over 90% of the GM crop market but offers just the same 4 crops and 2 traits.

"GM crops are a failed technology and Australian governments should stop right now squandering taxpayer funds on its false promises.

"Those resources are needed to repair the real systemic problems on Australian farms - soil loss, salinity, water pollution, drought, etc. that GM cannot fix.

"Australian governments have spent billions of dollars on the genetic manipulation of living things over the past 25 years and a stock take will show the effort has been a waste of time with very little of value produced," Mr Phelps concludes.

Comment:

Bob Phelps
Executive Director
Gene Ethics
60 Leicester St, Carlton 3053 Australia
Tel: 1300 133 868 or 03 9347 4500 {Int Code +613}
Tel H: 03 9889 1717
Email: info@geneethics.org
WWW: <http://www.geneethics.org>

THINK, CARE, ACT!