

ALP National Conference: Sydney – July 30 to August 1, 2009

# Keep promises on GM crops and foods!

**At the last election Kevin Rudd promised stronger laws on Genetically Manipulated (GM) foods and crops. The Rudd government should now implement his policies and the ALP should adopt them as policy too. The assessment, regulation and labelling of GM products would improve, so our food supply would be safer, environment cleaner and shoppers better informed. But instead, Rudd is following Howard's lead on GM. Labor's proposed new policy platform would break his promises and dilute ALP policy too. Unacceptable!!**

## ✓ ALP election promise: Nov 6, 2007

✓ **A Rudd Labor Government will ensure** that GM crops are not released unless there is whole of community consensus for their release and that they are safe to health, the environment and beneficial to the economy.

✓ **Labor will put in place** a rigorous and transparent process based on environmental and safety considerations, for assessing and approving or rejecting research proposals which require release of GMOs outside the laboratory.

✓ **Labor will ensure** all issues pertaining to import, export, production, distribution and use of GM Organisms (GMOs) are overseen by a strong national body that is independent, scientifically-based and whose processes are transparent.

✓ **Labor will preserve** the right of the States to

implement and manage moratoria on the commercial production of GM crops. To ensure our food is safe and of high quality.

✓ **Labor will maintain** consumer and environmental safety through strict enforcement of national standards as the principal policy consideration.

✓ **Labor will ensure** accurate information on GM products is provided to consumers and the community.

✓ **Labor will establish** a meaningful labeling regime that enables consumers to make informed choices about what they are buying.

✓ **Labor will undertake** continued research on the use of foods containing GMOs to better understand health, safety and environmental risks and benefits."

**The ALP should adopt these good promises as policy, and reject the proposed new national platform that would gut ALP policy. There is solid community support as most farmers, shoppers and the food industry want GM-free farms and foods. But Rudd implements Howard's policies and will not deliver on his own promises. For instance, government has allocated \$38.2 million to help develop and promote biotechnology and nanotechnology. This is public money for private profits, spent on technologies falsely claiming to be safe and also to solve emerging problems such as global climate change, the end of oil and food security. But the products of these technologies will worsen, not resolve, new crises.**

## ✘ National Platform Proposal 2009

✘ **87. Labor believes** the use and approval of genetically modified crops should be regulated before they can be grown commercially in Australia, in order to protect the health and safety of both people and the environment.

✘ **88. Labor understands** the value in looking at the science and research on GM crops on a case-by-case basis. Labor recognises that GM crops can contribute to meeting global challenges of climate change and food security.

✘ **89. Labor believes:**

- A licence for a GM crop must not be issued

unless it can be demonstrated that any risks can be managed to protect the health and safety of people and the environment.

- Foods produced using gene technology must be assessed as safe for human consumption before they can be sold.
- Labelling should enable people to make informed choices about what they eat.
- Rules requiring food containing DNA and/or protein resulting from genetic modification must be labelled 'genetically modified' should be retained.

**REJECT THESE PLATORM CHANGES: KEEP AND STRENGTHEN ALP GM POLICIES**  
(See Over)

Gene Ethics: T: 1300 133 868 (local call) E: [info@geneethics.org](mailto:info@geneethics.org) W: [www.geneethics.org](http://www.geneethics.org)

## What the ALP's Proposed National Platform on GM would mean ...

### ***Labor understands the value in looking at the science and research on GM crops on a case-by-case basis.***

- But case-by-case means assessment and regulation of GM crops and foods uses a 'science-based' system that is not rigorously scientific!! Regulators review mainly unsupported and unreliable company data. They do not set objective standards or benchmarks that would require top quality, peer-reviewed research findings as the sole basis for deciding a GM product is safe for health and the environment, or not. Our regulators have approved every GM crop and food application made to them, despite lacking good data.

### ***Labor recognises that GM crops can contribute to meeting global challenges of climate change and food security.***

- No. GM crops contribute to present unsustainable and destructive farming practices that are dependent on depleting oil supplies (for fuel, chemicals and fertilisers). These are among the causes of climate change and food insecurity, not the cure. Oil is running out, so farming methods must change very soon but GM crops will entrench oil dependence, not end it.
- No commercial GM crops exist to tolerate drought and salty soils, nor fix nitrogen in grains, despite Monsanto's 25 years of research. These complex crop traits, depend on the interaction of many genes, so cannot be transferred using GM's crude cut-and-paste techniques.
- 70% of commercial GM crops are designed to be sprayed more often and at higher doses with potent Roundup herbicide, to kill weeds 'better'. But this creates more chemical residues in the environment and our food, and weeds exposed to the chemical adapt to tolerate it. The other 30% of GM crops make their own insect toxins but insects also evolve to resist these chemicals and can remain in food.
- Many studies have found that GM crops yield less than the best conventional crop varieties, so they cannot contribute to ensuring supplies of the safe, top quality, affordable foods essential for food security.
- For instance, the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) data for last season shows the top conventional canola varieties out-yielded GM Roundup herbicide tolerant canola in Australia;
- The UN International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology - a four-year study by 300 scientists - found no proof that GM crops increase yields or lower synthetic chemical use;
- And "Failure to Yield", a Union of Concerned Scientists review of data from all GM crops grown since 1996 found, with a minor exception, GM crops yield less than the best conventional varieties. Traditional plant breeding has enabled far more of the increase in crop production over the past 15 years than GM. UCS report is at: [http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/science\\_and\\_impacts/science/failure-to-yeild.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/science_and_impacts/science/failure-to-yeild.html)

### ***Labor believes: Labelling should enable people to make informed choices about what they eat. Rules requiring food containing DNA and/or protein resulting from genetic modification must be labelled 'genetically modified' should be retained.***

- But these labelling rules were set up by Howard and are still in force. So shoppers are denied information and misinformed about ingredients in processed foods made using GM processes. Exemptions from labelling are in the GM food standard 1.5.2. Download it from: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/thecode/foodstandardscode/standard152foodprodu4248.cfm>
- Food standard 1.5.2 allows GM vegetable oils, starches and sugars made from GM soybean, corn, canola and cottonseed all to be unlabeled. FSANZ assumes that refining removes all DNA and protein from the end product. But people allergic to nuts are also allergic to their oil, though apparently free of such allergens. Also unlabeled: GM cottonseed oil used to fry fast food; the meat, milk, eggs and honey of animals fed GM feed; food colourings; processing aids and additives. Meat from animal clones may also soon be sold, untested and unlabelled.
- Food Standards Australia NZ (FSANZ) has approved over forty different varieties of GM soy, corn, canola, cotton, potato and sugar beet for use in our food supply. Yet we know that some GM foods are toxic to laboratory animals and their offspring. Harmful GM foods include GT73 canola, MON810 corn, CSIRO's field peas, and GM potatoes. Most countries in the European Union ban such foods and so should we! In both Russian and Austrian government studies, the offspring of rats fed Roundup tolerant GM soybean had lower birth weights and died more often than control animals. Rats fed GM potato had systemic illnesses. These and other scientific findings of harm from GM foods have not been refuted, yet FSANZ relies solely on chemical analyses of processed food products when considering the safety of GM. The results of animal feeding trials are ignored and GM foods are not tested on humans.

## **REJECT PLATORM CHANGES ON GM: KEEP AND STRENGTHEN ALP GM POLICIES**

**Gene Ethics: T: 1300 133 868 (local call) E: [info@geneethics.org](mailto:info@geneethics.org) W: [www.geneethics.org](http://www.geneethics.org)**