



# COLUMBAN MISSION INSTITUTE

**Columban Mission: Global and Local**

♦ Peace Ecology and Justice

6<sup>th</sup> August 2007

GM Crop Moratorium Review Secretariat  
NSW Department of Primary Industries  
Locked Bag 21  
Orange NSW 2800

Dear Chairperson

On behalf of the Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice, I make this submission to the review of the Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium ) Act 2003.

## **Introduction**

The Columbans are a missionary society. From experience with farmers in the Philippines and elsewhere, the Columban Mission Society has seen the impact of Genetically Modified crops on their livelihoods and their markets. The World Council of Churches, among others, reports similar negative experiences. (<http://wcc-coe.org/>) Australian authorities would do well to learn from these experiences. New South Wales farmers and consumers should be protected from the adverse effects of GM crops, as should all Australians. I am Co-ordinator of the Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice. I am also a mother and grandmother with family in the agriculture sector. I am therefore not only concerned about the current situation but for future generations and for the future viability of the Australian agriculture sector.

I submit that the moratorium on GM canola and other crops implemented in 2003 was a responsible action by the New South Wales Government, and should continue into the foreseeable future.

## **Submission**

### **The Purpose and Objectives of the Act:**

1. The need to protect adverse market outcomes continues. The very existence of the Act demonstrates that GM crops present risks to farmers and associated industries.
2. The onus should be on the GM providers to prove that they have overcome the risks. The costs and liabilities should be borne by GM providers.
3. Recent events involving unethical business practices have highlighted the recognition that market considerations must be based on ethical principles. Two key principles are the Common Good and the Precautionary Principle (Do no harm). While legitimate profit is acceptable, market and trade interests must take into consideration health and environmental risks. They are not separated.
4. The issue of GM crops affects the whole community as consumers. Provisions for community consultation in the Act need to ensure that information about GM Crops is objective and widely disseminated so that people can make informed choices.

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## Possible Impacts on Market Access, Trade and Investments:

1. The risk of contamination of conventional canola crops is significant, therefore the precautionary principle should apply. [www.non-gmfarmers.com](http://www.non-gmfarmers.com)
2. GM crops are an economic threat to farmers. They will lose their significant current market advantage if the green light is given to GM in Australia. This situation has not changed since 2003. eg Canada has lost market share since going GM. [www.non-gmfarmers.com](http://www.non-gmfarmers.com)
1. International market resistance to GM crops is growing [www.gmwatch.org](http://www.gmwatch.org)
2. The promise of choice for consumers will be false if the prohibition is lifted. Those who want GM free food would no longer have a choice. Choice is affected by both costs and availability. Evidence shows that GM crops incur higher costs over time and that availability of choice in the market place is reduced. [www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech/](http://www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech/)
3. The majority of the general public both in Australia and overseas does not want to eat GM food. [www.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/](http://www.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/)
4. Current Australian labelling laws do not provide information about GE content thus causing more consumer resistance and an injustice to consumers.
5. Since 2004, there have been enough indications of possible health and environmental problems ie; infertility reported among GM grain-fed cattle and pigs in the USA; bee Colony Collapse Disorder in the USA; and the spread of pathogens such as *Fusarium wilt* and bunchy top in Australian GM cotton [www.geneethics.org/](http://www.geneethics.org/) Growers have a responsibility in the market place to provide healthy food to consumers. If independent research is not done into the causes of these incidences plus the increased prevalence of allergies, there is the possibility of unimagined future costs involved eg. the tobacco industry, the cane toad, bitou bush.
6. The talk about benefits of greater yields, disease resistance and drought tolerance is proving to be just talk and belied by evidence. [www.-isis.org.uk](http://www.-isis.org.uk) Drought resistant GM varieties are not commercially available while a conventional drought resistant canola will be available soon. Conventional breeding has more sustainable benefits. [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au)
7. Co-existence of GM and GM free canola can not be guaranteed ([www.non-gmfarmers.com](http://www.non-gmfarmers.com)) and is a myth. This is unfair to conventional farmers who want to remain GM free.
8. Pressure from the Biotech industry promoting the use of GM biofuels as means of greenhouse gas reduction must be resisted. Diversity and sustainability are what people are looking for in the market place.

## Summary

In summary, the above points raise enough concerns for the prohibition on GM crops in NSW to be continued and the Act strengthened as mentioned. I have a distinct impression from reading media reports that the South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales Governments have already decided to approve GM crops. **This would be a disaster as far as the PEJ Centre is concerned. If GM food crops are released into the system, there would be no return.** From where we stand the reasons for implementing the moratorium in 2003 have increased, not decreased. The strong pressure from GM crop promoters and from the Federal Government comes from their self interest and is not in the best interests of the whole community: not the New South Wales agricultural sector, not consumers, not the wider Australian market.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this submission

Yours Sincerely



Anne Lanyon  
Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice