

# FOOD FAIRNESS ILLAWARRA

A community based alliance enabling healthy food for all



23 August 2007

INW07/9433  
received 31.8.07

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

Dear Members of the Secretariat,

**Re: Review of the moratorium on genetically engineered food crops.**

Food Fairness Illawarra, a large community based alliance in the Illawarra region of NSW strongly supports the extension of the current moratorium on genetically engineered food crops.

Food Fairness Illawarra has a membership over 80 people comprising various organisations and institutions, public health professionals, environmentalists, community workers, gardeners and community representatives. Food Fairness Illawarra's membership is working together towards enabling access to a healthy food supply for everyone in our community. Membership of the alliance continues to grow strongly. It is notable that many new members have joined the alliance this year to add their voice to opposing genetically modified food being introduced in Australia.

As you meet to review the current Genetically Modified, (GM) Crop Moratorium, Food Fairness Illawarra urges you to prevent GM canola from being allowed into the Australian food system, by supporting the extension of the current moratorium on GM food crops.

Food Fairness Illawarra strongly supports the extension of the current moratorium as the primary reasons for its existence have in fact not changed.

Please consider the subsequent positive economic benefits of continuing with the current moratorium as listed below.

Australia's current GM-free food supply status has allowed:

- premiums of A\$120 per tonne for GM-free Australian canola have been realised abroad (ABARE, 2007);
- the absence of chronic GM contamination problems in export shipments has led to reduced expenditure;
- the absence of additional costs required for segregation, identity preservation and shipping of GM canola;
- a competitive advantage for Australian farmers in global canola markets as the only major GM-free canola trader; and
- increased consumer confidence in the quality of our food supply.

In contrast, if the GM canola ban was to expire, Australia would without doubt be required to bear the increased costs associated with:

- testing, identity preservation, segregation, handling, rejected shipments, lost markets and decreased confidence in Australia's clean, green, GM-free reputation for all foods;
- increased presence of herbicide tolerant weeds (wild radish, turnip, charlock, ryegrass and barnyard grass) through outcrossing, from Roundup and Basta tolerant GM canola and from repeated use of these chemicals. Weed costs are borne by everyone - local councils, parks authorities, landcare groups, farmers and gardeners.
- farmers and consumers being forced to pay for seed and sprays as dictated by companies such as Bayer and Monsanto that hold seed patents (EU, 2006);
- monopoly ownership and control by biotechnology companies of chemicals and seeds;
- ensuring organic, biodynamic and conventional foods labelled GM-free were still available; and
- the cost of any unexpected ill-effects to people or the environment resulting from the production of GM canola which is, after all, a relatively new practice.

Further to this, awareness of the unjust legal appropriation of life forms by biotechnology companies creates numerous ethical concerns that must not be disregarded. Using international agreements and US-style patenting laws, biotechnology companies have been steadily gaining control over the human food system. Through the use of new copyright laws, companies have been claiming possession of life from the level of a gene up. By law, biotechnology companies have been able to take from indigenous people and farmers' ownership of seeds that they have bred and tested over the millennia. In this process future research is also being inhibited as biotechnology companies patent scientific advances. Other researchers and institutes are being forced to pay before their scientists are able to use these advances in experiments making peer review difficult.

In contrast to this undesirable state of affairs, the review committee has the opportunity to extend the commercial GM canola ban in Australia.

In doing so Australian farmers would realise the benefits of being able to:

- continue to sell all foods into any market, often at premium prices; and
- keep their competitive advantage over GM growers in North and South America.

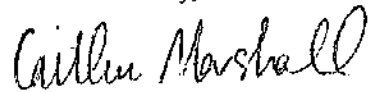
American farmers are often penalised through being forced to sell their grain often for a lesser price to be used for animal feed and ethanol, rather than for direct human consumption.

The moratorium on commercial GM canola should be extended until at least 2013, because it is unlikely that any other varieties of GM canola crops currently being researched could be available within the next five years. Promises of healthier foods, drought and salt tolerant crops, longer shelf life food, etc. are just wishful promises (Glover 2005, in Corish 2005).

Under the protection of the current moratorium Australia is uniquely placed as a large island continent with effective border controls to act as a clean GM-free seed environment. Without seeming alarmist, why do we need to rush into compromising our biodiversity when the current Act is effective? The cost of adopting a new technology too soon could be catastrophic and it seems obvious to err on the side of caution.

For all these reasons, Food Fairness Illawarra urge you to recommend to our Government that the current Act remains in force until at least 2013 and that for the sake of preserving the prosperity of all Australians, the moratorium orders on the growing of GM canola be retained.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caitlin Marshall".

Caitlin Marshall

On behalf of

Food Fairness Illawarra