STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

INQUIRY INTO MECHANISMS FOR ECONOMIC LOSS TO FARMERS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA CAUSED BY CONTAMINATION BY GENETICALLY MODIFIED MATERIAL

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
MONDAY, 23 APRIL 2018

SESSION TWO

Members

Hon Matthew Swinbourn (Chair)
Hon Colin Holt (Deputy Chair)
Hon Tim Clifford
Hon Samantha Rowe
Hon Dr Steve Thomas

_____

Hearing commenced at 10.46 am

Mr JUSTIN (BEN) COPEMAN
Chief Executive Officer, Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd, sworn and examined:

Mr SACHIN AYACHIT
General Manager, Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd, sworn and examined:

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome you to the hearing.

[Witnesses took the affirmation.]

The CHAIRMAN: Each of you will have signed a document entitled "Information for Witnesses". Have you read and understood that document?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast on the internet. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record and please be aware of the microphones and try to talk into them. Ensure that you do not cover them with papers or make noise near them. Given that we are broadcasting over the internet, can you please try to speak in turn and not over each other. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege. Would you like to make an opening statement to the committee?

Mr COPEMAN: My personal feeling is that I congratulate you on the inquiry. It is a great step forward. We have both been in the organic industry for quite some time. I am an ex-rural producer myself. I was quite a largescale beef cattle operator as well as a grain grower, so the findings of this particular inquiry are of interest to me. I do not think we should just keep it to organic; I think it should go to any conventional farmer who considers themselves to be a non-GMO farmer. I do not know whether Sachin has something more to say, but thank you; we are glad to be part of the process.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Ayachit, do you have something you want to say?

Mr AYACHIT: Thank you for the opportunity to present ourselves. Being the largest certification body, we are representing more than 1 600 growers and processors in the country. We believe that the Australian Certified Organic standards and other standards in Australia are in line with international standards, and the outcome of this committee hearing will set a precedent not only in Australia but also internationally. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The CHAIRMAN: We provided you in advance with a list of questions we want to address. We are going to work our way through those questions. Other members of the committee may decide to jump in at some point to ask any questions that may arise through the course of presenting those questions. Could you please describe the general organic certification processes that Australian

Certified Organic adopts when it grants organic certification, as well as any auditing processes that are undertaken for testing for the presence of GM?

Mr COPEMAN: The general application process is pretty straightforward. The client fills out an application form. We assess that against the standard that they are applying for. We then allocate an auditor to go out to that property—we will keep this to rural producers, because that is what this inquiry is about. They go out to the property and do an inspection of the property. They will go through the client's organic management plan. They will go through other aspects of the application to make sure the client fully understands it. A report then comes back here to the certification officers, who review the auditor's report against the nominated standard. If that all stacks up and no what we call "corrective actions" are required, we issue the certificate for that particular standard. The auditing process when testing for the presence of GM is done on a case-by-case basis. The potential for contamination of GM in Australia is still very low, so we do that based on a risk assessment, prior to the auditor going out, as to whether he or she needs to be conscious of whether there is potential GM contamination. If the risk is low, we do not generally bother to test for it.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to detail the process by which Australian Certified Organic comes to a decision to suspend or decertify an organic producer on the grounds of GM contamination, and the basis upon which this decision is made?

Mr COPEMAN: It is somewhat hypothetical, because we have not been put in that position as yet. We know there was an incident in Western Australia a few years ago with Steve Marsh. We were both with NASAA at that point, so we have a bit of knowledge of that. Our process would be that if that event occurred, we would expect the client to notify us straightaway. We would isolate the contaminated area. We would take photos. We would do testing. The actual decision to suspend or decertify—remember, they are two totally separate processes—would be made based on, firstly, the level of contamination, and, secondly, the ongoing risk that that posed to any product coming off that property.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the mere presence of genetically modified material on a farm be sufficient to justify suspension or decertification, or must it be of the same species and genetic contamination has occurred?

Mr COPEMAN: GM is GM. I think it depends on the form that it was found on the property. We were just talking about this earlier. If a GM vaccine or something like that was found on the property or in an animal, the presence of that in itself may not require the suspension or decertification of the production area. If it was found as a crop or a seed that was growing on the property, the decision to suspend or decertify would be made at that point. The answer is that for a crop growing on the farm that is of GM origin, to suspend or decertify would be based on whether it was an intentional act to grow that crop or it was unintentional—if it blew in and it grew from an airborne event. Sachin might be able to explain it a bit easier. It basically moves around what type of contamination it is and whether it was intentional or unintentional.

Mr AYACHIT: I will quickly add to that. Suspension or decertification of any organic operation is a systematic, statewide process as outlined by our application requirements. Talking about the Australian operators who are certified to the national standard, there is a risk matrix to make that decision. The decision to suspend an operator has to go through a systematic process, which may include on-site inspection. The guideline issued by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in January 2018 provides all approved certification bodies with a benchmark framework in terms of how to handle different situations of contamination, not only of genetically modified organisms, but also contamination in general. We would follow the process that is outlined and required by our implementation, on a case-by-case basis.

[11.00 am]

The CHAIRMAN: If you were made aware of genetic contamination, what actions would you expect a farmer to take? Should they immediately act to mitigate the situation by clearing the GM crops from their land, or leave them there for you to inspect? Would there be an expectation that there be, as I said, immediate clearing and that sort of stuff?

Mr COPEMAN: The very first step is that they must notify us of a suspected contamination. Secondly, we would advise them at that point to isolate the area that they deemed to be contaminated. If they felt that by leaving the contaminant there it was going to increase the level of contamination, we would advise them to take photos of it and remove it. The whole concept would be around reducing the risk of further contamination.

Hon COLIN HOLT: You may need to take this on notice. I was just wondering if you could give us an example of suspension or decertification that has occurred other than with GM. In what other circumstances would that occur, what would be the remedial action and what process would you go through?

Mr AYACHIT: I do not know.

Mr COPEMAN: We have not actually had to decertify anyone because of GM contamination.

Hon COLIN HOLT: What about other contamination? Let us disregard GM for the moment. You must have decertified or suspended other growers. Under what circumstances would that occur? Can you provide us with some idea of your processes?

Mr COPEMAN: Yes, we certainly have decertified operators over the years. Certainly, if they use a prohibited chemical, it may be grounds for suspension and/or decertification. I am trying to think of something other than chemicals. If they used an improper vaccine, that could be grounds for a suspension.

Hon COLIN HOLT: I am happy for you to take it on notice. If you want to think about it and provide us with some specific examples, that would be useful.

Mr AYACHIT: I will start with the deliberate use of prohibited materials. All standards require us to use that situation for critical non-compliance, which may end in immediate suspension. That is the deliberate use of prohibited substances. Number two is the accidental or negligent use of prohibited substances. Depending upon the risk analysis done at the time of on-site inspection and the inspector recommendation, the decision will be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the risk that the prohibited material has on the integrity of the organic product. It goes back to the risk matrix that we will use, advised by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, to make that decision.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you give us a description or an example of the premiums that your customers obtain for their organic produce?

Mr COPEMAN: It varies from sector to sector. The wine industry, for example, does not get any premium; it is fairly closely aligned with the conventional price. Horticultural probably gets a 15 to 20 per cent premium. It is probably the only sector of the industry where the organic price is linked to the conventional price, in that as the conventional price fluctuates, so does the organic price. When you get into the red meat industry—the cattle industry—it is a very consistent price. The beef industry has been up around the 690c to 720c a kilo for the last four or five years, while the conventional industry—I am referring to the eastern market indicator; I am not sure what it has been in the west—has varied from 390c back up to 700c only last year some time. Where there is a big fluctuation in the conventional beef market, that does not occur in the organic beef market. In

other sectors, the premium for grain, for example, can be between 50 per cent and 100 per cent. There have been times when organic oats in Western Australia has returned the grower double what the conventional oat price has been getting. There is a significant upside, but not in all sectors.

Mr AYACHIT: Just to add to that, it also depends on what market you export to.

Mr COPEMAN: Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN: A submitter has stated that nowhere in the current organic standards is zero tolerance to GMOs explicitly stated. GMOs are listed as a prohibited input and some Australian certifiers have incorrectly interpreted this to mean zero tolerance. What is your position on this statement?

Mr COPEMAN: It is an interesting comment. I searched a number of different dictionaries and looked for the word "prohibited". Just about every one came back and said that the issue—whatever it is you are referring to—has been forbidden or banned. There is not a lot of tolerance around the word "forbidden". I do not think there is a lot of tolerance around the word "prohibited". Our position on that statement is that a prohibited input does mean zero.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay. Would you agree, then, that the description of GMOs as a prohibited input in your standard effectively means zero tolerance?

Mr COPEMAN: Absolutely. That is the intent of the standards.

Mr AYACHIT: Section 4.7.14 of the "Australian Certified Organic Standard" also mentions that the residues or cross-contamination of GM into certified crops or produce is prohibited. It is not only the prohibition of GMOs as an input, but also the residues in the final product. Based on those two facts, we understand that it means zero tolerance.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay. Some submitters have stated that because GM canola cannot cross-pollinate with other crops, farmers will not suffer economic loss because contamination is not possible. What is your position on this statement?

Mr COPEMAN: I had never heard that, so I spent about two hours researching it and found quite a number of very, very good papers coming out of America and Canada. Not one of those papers said that GM canola would not cross-pollinate. They said that cross-pollination with certain crops was unlikely because the pollen is very sticky and very heavy and does not necessarily transfer by wind that far. The furthest they had found evidence of wind-borne pollen was about 2.5 kilometres in Canada, but in the majority of cases the pollen fell within five metres of the plant. They did not say it would not cross-pollinate. There might be difficulties in cross-pollinating because it will not travel that far, but that does not stop it from travelling by way of a bee or a butterfly or other pollinators. Our position on that is that it is probably an incorrect statement.

Mr AYACHIT: We should not be looking at cross-pollination as the only way of contamination. As GMOs do not belong to organic systems, there may be different ways that GMO seed may contaminate the organic ecosystem.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The organic export notice 2018–01, recently issued by the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources—I believe you have referred to it already, Mr Ayachit—recommends that where there has been an accidental introduction of a prohibited substance, including GMOs, the appropriate sanction should be the issuing of a corrective action request only and not a suspension or decertification of the relevant unit. What is Australian Certified Organic's position on this?

Mr COPEMAN: We are quite in favour of the notice. We support it. We support its intent. Sachin has referred to it a number of times. In the event that we had not only a GM event but any sort of major contamination event, we would follow the department's notice to the letter.

[11.10 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to outline examples of accidental introduction of GMOs of minor, moderate and major severity, and can you explain the differences and the requisite contamination levels?

Mr COPEMAN: We have not had a situation here at ACO that has involved contamination or introduction of GMOs into an organic production system. Would you like us to maybe look at a hypothetical minor, moderate and major severity event?

The CHAIRMAN: I think it is telling to us that you say you have not had any. I do not want you to necessarily speculate any further on that.

Hon COLIN HOLT: Just before we move on, what about examples of accidental contamination from other problems—not GMOs—into an organic system? Do you have any examples of that?

Mr AYACHIT: I may elaborate on some minor, moderate and major severity, or noncompliance as we call it. A good example of minor severity will be accidental use of a GM vaccine on cattle. If there is the use of GM vaccine on cattle and the cattle is segregated and sold as nonorganic, we will treat that as a minor noncompliance. A moderate event in this context would be GM feed being fed to chickens. That would be a loss of certification status for chickens. That would be a moderate noncompliance. Major would be sowing GM seed deliberately or using a major ingredient in a process that is genetically modified.

Hon COLIN HOLT: But some of those would not be accidental, would they?

Mr AYACHIT: That is correct.

Hon COLIN HOLT: What about some accidental ones—for example, a chicken farmer accidentally bought some uncertified seed?

Mr AYACHIT: Then I would follow the department's guidelines to make that decision—what is the impact on the certified land and the certified property and products?

Hon COLIN HOLT: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee has received evidence that a zero tolerance for organic standards is unreasonable and is driving confrontation over the mixture of GM and non-GM crops, pointing to maximum permitted levels of other substances in food. Also, some submitters have stated that they believe GM contamination in Australia has become a contentious issue due to the organic standards being too tight. When did Australian Certified Organic first introduce a zero tolerance for GM material in its standard for organic certification?

Mr COPEMAN: We went back through every old standard and the section on GMs is in every one of them. We believe that the standard was written before GMs became an issue in the organic production system. We are guessing, but we think that the GM clause was introduced into the Australian Certified Organic Standard somewhere towards the end of the 1990s.

The CHAIRMAN: Why does Australian Certified Organic consider zero tolerance for GM contamination reasonable?

Mr COPEMAN: The decision on zero tolerance is driven by a number of factors. Certainly, there are scientific things that people far more intelligent than I am want to debate. From our point of view, it is driven by what our clients want—the people who actually take our certification. That is what

they want; they want zero tolerance. The decision to keep zero tolerance is also driven by the consumer. Consumers do not want GMOs in their food systems. Probably as important, it is driven by the requirements of our export markets. When there was talk some time ago by people outside the industry that we were too harsh and should have a tolerance level for GMs, it was made very, very clear to us by Korea and China that if any tolerance was given to GMs in the agricultural production chain, we would lose those markets. The decision for us sitting here as people who implement the standard is that it is driven by the people who use it, consume it or buy it.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think there is any way of overcoming this divergence of views and reaching consensus on a way of constituting a tolerance level or percentage?

Mr COPEMAN: Again, it comes down to all our stakeholders agreeing to it. I mean, the whole question comes down to something that I feel is being lost in the bush at the moment. As I said, I am an ex-rural producer. I had fairly large holdings out in western New South Wales. We always had this attitude that you can do what you want on your own property, but not at the expense of the enjoyment of your neighbour. The consensus that we need to be able to find a clear way forward comes down to people respecting other people's rights. It comes down to the organic industry as well, saying, "Yes, we don't agree with you, Mr GM farmer, but it is a legal crop and we respect your right to grow it", and we work with them to put risk-management processes in place so that that farmer doing what he is legally allowed to do does not impact on me doing what I am allowed to do. Until we can all agree that we live in the one big production system and just do it in different ways, I am not sure we are going to get that consensus.

The CHAIRMAN: I note that clause 3.2 of the "NASAA Organic and Biodynamic Standard" states —

> The NASAA Organic Standard prohibits the presence of GMO's either deliberate or accidental in any segment of the organic food chain.

The equivalent "National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce" states —

> The use of genetically modified/engineered seed and transgenic plants or the application of GMO derived substances for treating plants is prohibited in organic and bio-dynamic farming.

Why do you believe the national standard omits the words "either deliberate or accidental"?

Mr AYACHIT: I believe the guidelines to assess the severity of the contamination already address that aspect of contamination, whether that is deliberate or accidental. It is not explicit in the standard, but it is covered in the mechanism that all certifiers are following.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you believe the national standard, by the appearance of the word "use", is intended to cover only deliberate use and not accidental?

Mr AYACHIT: Prior to the guidelines being in place, the interpretation of the standard by certifiers was that it covers both—negligent as well as accidental.

The CHAIRMAN: You said negligent, then, or did you mean deliberate?

Mr AYACHIT: Deliberate and accidental, sorry.

The CHAIRMAN: In your submission on page 3 you state it is a common misconception that the EU and the US have a defined GMO tolerance of 0.9 per cent and that this is incorrect. You then state on page 4 that the EU does have a 0.9 per cent adventitious or technically unavoidable tolerance in all food production systems, including organic, and that GMOs in a proportion of no higher than 0.9 per cent do not have to be indicated on the food label. The committee has received evidence stating that the current organic standard has zero per cent tolerance for genetically modified

organisms, when the US standard is five per cent and the EU standard is 0.9 per cent. Could you clarify and expand on these statements and correct what you describe as misconceptions?

Mr COPEMAN: In my submission on page 3, I am referring to the fact that no standard anywhere on the planet has a GMO tolerance for on-farm contamination. This hearing is all about on-farm contamination; it is not addressing issues in the downstream production of organic products. You can go to America, you can go to Europe and you can go to any of those places—none of those standards allows a tolerance for contamination at farm-gate level. My statement there, where it says the US standard is five per cent and the EU standard is 0.9 per cent—the five per cent is at the bottom of page 4 —is that —

> The NOP regulations establish a tolerance for the presence of pesticides registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that is set at 5% of the EPA tolerance level for the specific residue detected.

We have spoken to Miles McEvoy, who was the deputy administrator of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. It does not specifically address the issue of tolerance at any stage. Basically, they say that excluded products are prohibited in production systems, but if that contamination is found further down the production line, the farmer is not penalised so long as the farmer has followed all the necessary steps required in the production system. So my comments there are correct. While the EU has a tolerance of 0.9, the individual member states do not. In answer to a question further down, the individual member states are the ones whose stands take precedence. So the 0.9 that is allowable under the EU system is technically useless.

[11.20 am]

Mr AYACHIT: If I may add, there is a policy guideline published by USDA in January 2012 which specifically mentions that no federal agency, including EPA or USDA, has established tolerance levels for the inadvertent presence of the products of excluded methods, including GMOs. When we look at the EU regulation, that regulation relates to the labelling of products that include genetically modified organisms as opposed to the organic regulations.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to provide us with a copy of that USDA document you are referring to, please?

Mr AYACHIT: Yes.

Mr COPEMAN: The five per cent that the EPA referred to was a chemical contamination, not a GMO contamination.

The CHAIRMAN: All right. Some submissions have pointed to the fact that there are low-level tolerances for other contaminants as well as food processing aids in food. Why should GM be any different?

Mr COPEMAN: There are certain chemicals where there is zero tolerance—glyphosates, for example. GMOs are one of those what we call prohibited substances that are not tolerable at any level. Certain minor chemicals, while we would not tolerate it, would probably get a lesser suspension than if someone used glyphosates. It comes down to identifying the level of risk that is in that particular assessment that you are making and the impact that that prohibited product or input is having on that particular property and product. While there are the MRLs that we are aware of in conventional food, we do not necessarily allow the MRLs in organic, but if a product does show evidence of contamination and it is below the MRL, then our reaction to that will be a lot less severe than it would be should it be a GMO or glyphosate contamination.

The CHAIRMAN: What we are trying to get at here is that there are some tolerances for other substances, I think, which may have been described or loosely referred to as prohibited substances. The question here is: if we can have some tolerances for those things, why can we not have some tolerances for GM?

Mr COPEMAN: I do not think we have any tolerances in the organic system, have we?

Mr AYACHIT: There is 10 per cent. I will add to that. We see chemical contamination as an external contamination that impacts the product or the land. Where the contamination by genetically modified organisms is actually impacting the genetic framework itself, it is not only impacting the plant but has far-reaching impacts that none of us have any idea about or any control over.

The CHAIRMAN: Some submitters have stated that the existing common law provides sufficient coverage for any damage by GMOs and that there has not been a single legitimate instance in Australia of a non-GM or organic grower suffering a pure economic loss directly resulting from the unintended presence of an approved GMO. What is Australian Certified Organic's position on this statement?

Mr COPEMAN: The first statement about common law providing sufficient coverage, there has really been only one test of that, and that is the Steve Marsh case, and Steve may have a different opinion on that statement. The second statement is probably correct. Steve Marsh had a legitimate case; it was put towards the court, and the court made a decision. Outside of that, it is a correct statement. There has not been a single case of an organic grower suffering a pure economic loss or being able to prove that they have suffered a direct economic loss from the unintended presence of GMOs. So, thankfully, it is a true statement.

Mr AYACHIT: If I may, my comment is about the statement about proving it with 100 per cent statistical confidence. The organic certification system is a proactive and risk-based auditing system. If you look at the concepts of auditing and certification, none of the auditing and certification systems will guarantee 100 per cent statistical confidence. This is an auditing process that looks at the entire production chain and makes sure that producers, manufacturers and processors are not using prohibited materials. It does not necessarily guarantee that the certified product has zero risks either, or the chemicals. So it is an auditing process that looks at the holistic approach of production and processing.

The CHAIRMAN: We are going to push on because we are running out of time. A statutory review of the national gene technology scheme found that, one, a strict liability system would not remove the need for court action, as the plaintiff would still need to prove a causal link between the GMO and the damage incurred, as well as the extent of their loss, in order to receive damages; two, in other jurisdictions, strict liability schemes relate to super hazardous goods and it is contradictory to treat a product found to be safe by the federal regulator as super hazardous; three, applying a strict liability scheme to the licensee of the technology could remove the incentive for growers to take steps to avoid the unintended presence of GM in a neighbour's field, and this would not be a reasonable solution. Some submitters have made similar points to those made by the review. What is your view on these statements, and can you please provide commentary on possible compensation mechanisms, as well as insurance?

Mr COPEMAN: I am not sure how a strict liability system would be actually imposed; I really do not. Where do you impose it, and on what level? So I am not sure I can answer the question. I do not have an answer for it. I do not know how a liability scheme of any sort can be imposed, because the liability could be assumed at any level. I do not know whether you can add to it?

Mr AYACHIT: No, I do not have any comments.

Mr COPEMAN: Maybe we as certifiers need to work with insurance companies for our producers to be able to get a form of insurance against that sort of contamination. I am not sure.

The CHAIRMAN: All right. What is Australian Certified Organic's position on the finding by the court in Marsh v Baxter that the cause of the economic loss by Marsh was the misapplication of the NASAA standards?

[11.30 am]

Mr COPEMAN: I sat through most of Steve Marsh and Michael Baxter's case. To say that there was a misapplication of NASAA standards is somewhat unfair, because the two people who had to assess how they applied the standard in Steve Marsh's case had never had a precedent to work on, so they applied it as per the standard as the way the standard was written. Knowing what we know now, with the benefit of hindsight, we may have been able to do it in a different way. Probably the only real mistake as per the standard they made was that they issued Steve with a decertification notice. A decertification notice automatically means that the contract to grow organic is cancelled, but we did not cancel the contract.

He was still able to use the balance of his property that was not contaminated. With the benefit of hindsight, he should have been issued with a suspension notice, which would have the same effect, which would then have allowed him to keep going. Justice Martin particularly caned NASAA because of that error in the interpretation of decertification and the cancellation of the contract. I do not really believe that NASAA misapplied the standard. We could have been more flexible in places, but when I say "we", we both worked for NASAA, but we came in quite some time after all this was done. We were basically the ones who had to fix it all up and manage the fallout from it. I think in all fairness to the two people who did the assessment in that particular case, they had no precedent to work on, and I do believe that they followed the standard in a manner that they believed was appropriate. In summary of all that, Justice Martin I thought was somewhat harsh in the way that he applied his judgement.

Hon COLIN HOLT: Can I just ask, you said that with the benefit of hindsight, you might do things differently. What would you do differently now?

Mr COPEMAN: I think we would have pushed a lot harder for mediation, to start with. It would not have stopped the outcome on Steve's property—he would still have been suspended, and he would still have gone through the process of cleaning it up, and we worked closely with him over those three or four years to get it cleaned up. But I think we were possibly at fault in that we did not push hard enough for a mediated settlement and/or some sort of discussion around where it all ended up. As a certification body, as an industry leader, we probably should have taken a bigger role in preventing it getting into court.

Mr AYACHIT: From a certification point of view, just to add to Ben's statement, a big difference is not having clear guidelines in place to deal with accidental contamination, which was missing at that time, to where we are at this point in time where we have clear guidelines in terms of addressing these accidental and very great use of any prohibited substance including GMOs. That is a huge difference in terms of making those decisions.

Hon COLIN HOLT: Are you in a position to table those guidelines for us, or take it on notice that you will table the guidelines?

Mr COPEMAN: Would you like us to email them through to you?

The CHAIRMAN: At the end of this hearing, we will forward to you a list of the questions that have been put to you on notice, and then you can provide those things to us. We will put that to you so that it is clear what we are asking for and then we will deal with it from there.

Mr COPEMAN: Okay.

The CHAIRMAN: We are really running out of time here. We have a number of other questions to ask. Some of these questions have been put to you on notice previously. We ask that you provide us with written responses to the remaining questions. There are a number of other questions that have arisen out of a hearing that was held on 11 April. We would like to put some questions to you as well. Do you have any issue with us putting those questions to you on notice and seeking written responses from you, because we have run out of time?

Mr COPEMAN: No, we do not have a problem with that at all.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have a closing statement that you would like to make?

Mr COPEMAN: I cannot think of anything more we need to make, other than, again, we are glad to be part of the process that will have international connotations based on the decision that you arrive at. But I think we should not just keep it at organic, it should be all, because there is a very large percentage of Western Australian farmers who do not want GMOs on their property. So I would encourage you to look at this being broader than just GM contamination on organic properties.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr Copeland and Mr Ayachit for your attendance today. Obviously the technology has its advantages and disadvantages but I think we persevered through those trying moments. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction. If you believe that any corrections should be made because of typographical or transcription errors, please indicate these corrections on the transcript. For those questions that have been taken on notice, the committee requests that you provide your answers to these questions when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. If you want to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, you may provide supplementary evidence for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you for your time today, gentlemen.

The WITNESSES: Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 11.35 am