

**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 THREE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 11.48 am

Ms SHIRLEY COLLINS

Representative, FOODwatch WA, sworn and examined:

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome you to the meeting. Before we begin, I must ask you to take either the oath or affirmation.

[Witness took the affirmation.]

The CHAIRMAN: You have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?

Ms COLLINS: Yes, I have.

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. Please be aware of the microphones and try to talk into them. Ensure that you do not cover them with paper or make noise near them. 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 you 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?

Ms COLLINS: I was asked to give a general overview of the role and operations of FOODwatch, so I will just dive in there.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, you can do that.

Ms COLLINS: FOODwatch WA is a consumer group advocating for a food system that we can trust through transparency, labelling and choice, or TLC. We want to know where our food comes from, what is in it and to make an informed choice to buy or not. The environmental release of genetically modified organisms fails on all three counts, so we have serious concerns about the risk to health and environment. A limited range of GM crops and foods has received regulatory approval for commercial release in Australia but the risk assessment has relied primarily on the ill-defined notions of substantial equivalence and GRAS, which is “generally regarded as safe”, and on representations by the patent owners who stand to benefit, typically a chemical company, while dismissing the precautionary principle when independent scientific analysis has raised concerns. To that end, I have given you a couple of documents that show where the regulators are involved and why that is important here, because they are at the federal level as the gatekeeper and we are left at the state level to deal with that. I think that is an important issue.

We are a broad-reaching network of individuals and groups across Perth and regional WA and a member of the GM-Free Australia Alliance, in liaison with international networks. I am speaking today for FOODwatch representative Janet Grogan, who first heard of GMO food about 15 years ago when she was given a *Truefood Guide*—I have given you one of those so you can have a look—

and began investigating because she wondered, “Why didn’t I know about this? What are they doing to our food and why are they altering our food in this way?” For me, I come to this topic from a technology–science background and quality systems putting new technologies onto the market. I have concerns that the quality processes that should be in place with the environmental release of GMOs—I cannot see that they are there. On that, I would like to say that I distinguish and make no comment about GMOs in medicine, because that is a different regulatory process, a different minister to what we have. It is like comparing nuclear in medicine versus the environmental release of radiation in mining or power. It is very different. My comments I restrict to the plant breeding and GMOs that come through to our food.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms Collins. I would just like to emphasise here that the purpose of the committee’s inquiries is not to get into a debate about the value of GM versus non-GM in terms of what people’s view might be as to whether it is good or bad. What we are mostly interested in is whether or not a compensation mechanism should be put in place for farmers who choose to grow non–genetically modified organisms and how that might look and whether it is appropriate and that sort of thing. What we have done is provided a list of questions in advance to FOODwatch and what we plan to do is work our way through those questions. You have answered the first one, which was to give us an overview of the role and operations of FOODwatch. The second question we have here is that some submitters have stated that there have been no shipments of grain rejected by export markets to the unintended presence of GM canola since its introduction in Western Australia, and that any compensation scheme is nothing but a solution looking for a problem. The FOODwatch submission states that roadside spills and contamination events have previously been recorded in WA. Firstly, what is your feedback on the statement regarding no loss of export markets, and, secondly, are you aware of any instances in Western Australia, excluding the one that was the subject of the court proceedings in Marsh and Baxter, where there have been claims of economic loss by farmers due to GM contamination; and, if you are aware, can you please provide the committee with some details?

Ms COLLINS: For starters, that first statement ignores the loss of certified organic markets and any downstream loss in the certified organic food chain from losing a certified grower like Marsh. The fact that it has been achieved, the bigger, the main grain markets, is a credit to CBH, and I do give them due credit for doing their best to implement this. It is a bit of luck when quality is not built into a system but you are relying on testing at the end; then you are relying on sampling techniques and you are relying on quality of the testing equipment that you are using. There have been occasions where a negative result at this end, when they test at the destination, can return a positive result. It is bit of luck that we have had no major rejections at this point, because we can certainly see it when we look overseas. We have seen shipments rejected. There was unapproved GM wheat coming up in wheatfields in Oregon, causing Japan, Korea and Taiwan to reject shipments of US wheat. And they did not wait for the testing to prove it was contaminated, they just went on the perception that it might be contaminated. I actually attended a wheat industry conference while that happened and they did not raise the issue of that contamination incident overseas at all, although there is a lot of talk by the industry of implementing GM wheat in Australia and in Western Australia.

The CHAIRMAN: 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 FOODwatch’s position on this statement?

Ms COLLINS: Canola is a brassica and it will cross. Professor Stephen Powles has done some research on that. The maximum distance he tested to was three kilometres, and he did find horizontal gene flow in his report titled “Long distance pollen-mediated flow of herbicide resistance genes in Lolium

rigidum.” It was published in 2008 in the journal *Theoretical and Applied Genetics*. Although Japan does not grow GM canola itself, the GM seed it imports and spills around ports and along roadsides and silos has crossed with wild roadside brassicas. They have got some strange giant weeds growing on their roadside, with multiple herbicide resistant traits because they have imported multiple GM.

The CHAIRMAN: Sorry; has that been documented somewhere?

Ms COLLINS: I have received documentation directly from Japan on that and I could forward you some evidence of it.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay; that might be helpful.

Ms COLLINS: Bees and other pollinators carry GM pollen and that can be a problem for organic horticulturalists and also if the GM pollen is detected in honey. Mexico has been on the edge there at times, with having shipments rejected by Europe, particularly Germany.

[12 noon]

The CHAIRMAN: There appears to be some differences of opinion expressed in submissions to the committee about the value of GM and non-GM canola. One point of view is that non-GM canola obtains a premium and another is that it is the oil content that is the biggest determination of value, not whether it is GM or non-GM. What is your feedback on that statement?

Ms COLLINS: I am not close enough really to know exactly, but the first thing that comes to mind is in 2010 in a drought year one of the growers planted three farms with GM and got a lot of media attention about it. It turned out that he planted three types of GM. The one he was told by Monsanto that would do the best, he planted a lot of. The one that he was told would do the least well, he planted less of. But because it was a drought year it tipped all that on its head and he ended up suffering a loss himself that year. He sold a farm and I do not know where he is now.

The CHAIRMAN: You do not have anything specifically about the claim that it is essentially the oil content that is the determination of price rather than whether it is GM or non-GM?

Ms COLLINS: We have just been watching the prices, particularly CBH, weekly and see that they have ranged over the years from \$25 to \$85 per tonne difference and probably settle around about \$30 to \$40 a tonne difference here in WA. The difference over in the eastern states can be a little bit different to that. An important one I think to sort of think about here is that Australia is GM-free corn by an industry-imposed moratorium, basically, to have GM free corn and now we are enjoying up over \$100 per tonne premium due to the increase in GM contamination in the Americas.

The CHAIRMAN: The organic export notice 2018-01 recently issued by the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources recommends that where there has been an accidental introduction of a prohibited substance, including GMOs, the appropriate sanction by the certification body should be the issuing of a corrective action request only, not as suspension or decertification of the relevant unit. What is FOODwatch’s position on this?

Ms COLLINS: For starters, we question the timing and intent of the update because the standard had not changed since 2015–16. This inquiry was announced on 7 December and then within a month over Christmas and New Year, some sentences were added. Having said that, it fails to recognise when a GM incursion was uninvited and imposing a corrective action on someone that is outside of their control, the incursion invariably that we experience here comes from a neighbour. We have seen in *Marsh v Baxter*, you can make your best efforts to not have that incursion happen. I think what needs to be recognised is what to do in that situation when you did not invite it. What it meant, I am assuming in *Marsh’s* case, was he had to go back to court for interlocutory injunctions

in order to get a fair buffer and no swathing so that he would have half a chance of protecting his crop or farm. So the principle onus must be on the GM grower to contain their crop.

The CHAIRMAN: You state in your submission, and this is the submission of FOODwatch, that currently the common law does not work as a form of redress in cases of GM contamination referring to the Marsh and Baxter decision. The committee has received evidence from some submitters that the common law is adequate or that a single case is not sufficient to draw a conclusion that common law remedies are inadequate to compensate GM farmers. Can you envisage there being possible factual scenarios which might have led to a different result to the one in Marsh and Baxter, and if you can, can you please provide details?

Ms COLLINS: My first thought there is that if it had, in reality, been a farmer versus farmer, the outcome might have been different, possibly an out-of-court settlement. But it was hard to believe that Baxter would, of his own volition, put his wife and children through the angst of a protracted court case. As we subsequently found out and saw, was that he had legal and financial support from the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and Monsanto. Also, it was a time that the Department of Agriculture and Food was in a direct business relationship with Monsanto in InterGrain. InterGrain was moving into the department headquarters. From where I sit, I could not see very much assistance being given to Marsh from the department and I think it got down to less than one FTE working on the organic sector within the department. It was not a level playing field, as far as testing the court process. The other thing here was that if the department's own guidelines had been mandated and observed by Baxter, then the GM contamination risk would have been considerably reduced. Similarly, if some of the other "promises"—from where we sit we took them as promises—as the debate went through Parliament on allowing the GM to be grown, there were things like a GM map talked about, so that we would know where the GM growers were and the neighbours could take appropriate action knowing that their neighbour was going to grow GM. But that was up there only by shire for a couple of years and then not. As I understand it, the department had no regulatory ability to get the data because Monsanto was collecting the data and the government could not—so they told us—get a hold of it. Instead of a GM map, the department offered to put up a sensitive sites map, so the organic growers and biodynamic could identify where they were—I think aquaculture was in there as well—but that had no teeth, no protections associated with it and we just watched some of these organic growers being surrounded by GM rather than being protected by that.

The CHAIRMAN: Does FOODwatch believe there is a risk that if GM-free farmers make compensation claims under any statutory or other scheme, actions for unlicensed patent of use may be made, potentially having a chilling effect on the making of such claims; and, if so, what would be your recommendation on overcoming this?

Ms COLLINS: On Monsanto's own website when they introduced GM in the US, they sued farmers, so that is a real concern. At the moment —

The CHAIRMAN: This is suing for unlicensed patent use, is that what you are saying?

Ms COLLINS: That is right, yes. Because GM was introduced in the US and no-one really kind of knew about it, so if it lobbed on your land and was growing and you found that it resisted a chemical, potentially they were growing it not realising it was a patent infringement. I heard Keryn McLean from Monsanto, here after the Marsh v Baxter contamination incident, interviewed on radio and she said that Monsanto would not sue Marsh because it was not intentional, on his part. He did not intentionally grow GM and birds fly and the wind blows. My concern is that unless the government puts something in place to override patent law, then at the moment Monsanto has the upper hand on that. People say Monsanto writes the rules.

[12.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have a recommendation as to how this might be overcome?

Ms COLLINS: My STEM education lets me down here. I would need to take legal advice on that.

The CHAIRMAN: Fair enough. That is okay.

Ms COLLINS: On history, politics and law, I lack out a bit.

The CHAIRMAN: That is all right. Some submitters asked that if a compensation scheme was introduced for GM contamination, whether there would also be compensation for all sources of contamination including weed intrusion, which some have submitted is a problem from organic farms due to a lack of weed control. What is FOODwatch's position on this?

Ms COLLINS: From the firsthand knowledge of organic farmers, I think that that criticism of them is unfounded. They have a standard that they need to conform to; there is a quality system in place of audits to keep on top of these things. I think the accusation is unfounded and organic has been around forever really, but GM is the new introduced novel organism and that is in the hands of a minority of growers. The majority of farmers are not growing GM. I think it is just looking at what is going on here.

The CHAIRMAN: I take it from that that the position is that you are not supportive of a compensation scheme being extended to all forms of contamination.

Ms COLLINS: I suggest that the other farming systems, conventional non-GM and organic, have been around for a long while, and if there was an issue to be had there, it would have come up before now. It is only the introduction of GM into the mix and we have the majority of farmers being the conventional non-GM and the organic who are not involved in it. It is a minority that are GM.

Hon COLIN HOLT: There have been cases, though, of spray drift affecting aquacultural industry or aquacultural operations.

Ms COLLINS: Yes, there has.

Hon COLIN HOLT: I do not think we have established a compensation mechanism for that.

Ms COLLINS: No. In the interests of trying to get on in your community, sometimes these things are not pursued and you just do the best that you can. Again, in that case, if you are using chemicals in your own farming system and you have a problem from someone else's chemicals, then a lot of these things do tend to be sorted out over the fence, as they say. But GM was a different story because of the patent law and what it brought with it.

The CHAIRMAN: Some people have stated in their submissions that the introduction of a compensation scheme would stifle agricultural innovation. What is your position on this?

Ms COLLINS: We have got compensation schemes that exist elsewhere, like no-fault insurance in road accidents, and I cannot see that that is going to stifle car manufacturing and innovation with cars moving forward. I think on the other hand it could lead to a better outcome by ensuring that proper quality processes are designed in. If the original implementation and audits were done properly with corrective and preventive actions, then the risk of GM contamination and call on compensation would have been reduced or would be reduced. The big show stopper is the reluctance of the GM industry to implement testing and traceability through to the end consumer, so ensuring that GM continues. We continue to view GM with suspicion, because they have not got traceability through to the final product.

The CHAIRMAN: Some submitters have also raised that the prospect of a compensation scheme might give rise to false claims to access compensation. What is FOODwatch's response to that claim?

Ms COLLINS: Again, we have got compensation schemes in other arenas that we can model from there, and if it is properly administered and is transparent, it should be manageable.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee has received evidence that agricultural crops are never 100 per cent pure and that co-existence means meeting agreed low level thresholds of GM. What is FOODwatch's feedback on this statement regarding GM?

Ms COLLINS: We used to be 100 per cent GM-free, before GM came along. When the industry came in—I think it is a handout that I have given you there, it has got CSO1 and CSO1-A. It is headed up, "Simple Testing Methodology". But this document actually came from Monsanto to an MP in 2010. You can see that what was normal was being flipped on its head. You could either have a lot of GM or a little bit of GM and the norm, like canola, has been defined as GM, basically, then the adventitious presence has been defined in terms of the GM up to 0.9 per cent. It is reverse logic. It actually does not acknowledge organic, so if you put a standard in place—people say there is no organic canola in Western Australia—but if you define a standard that does not allow for that, then that is going to cement that, perhaps unfairly. Because in Canada, they did used to grow organic canola, but that has been pushed out to the fringes now.

The CHAIRMAN: A number of farmers who have made submissions to this inquiry state that they grow GM and non-GM canola side by side successfully without any issues of contamination. Would your proposed compensation fund only be accessible to those farmers who exclusively grow conventional or organic crops or also to those who grow both crops; and, if so, please explain in what circumstances it would or could be accessible?

Ms COLLINS: I do not believe that self-inflicted GM contamination should be eligible. If it is self-inflicted, it should not be eligible. But, with the claims of growing GM and non-GM side by side, I question who is monitoring that at the moment? Who is testing it? Who is checking delivery dockets when the grower delivers? What is he delivering it as? Is he saying it is GM or is he delivering it as non-GM? The department guidelines recommend if growing it side by side that then the non-GM should in fact be delivered as GM. The other complicating thing here too with GM is that there is a three-to-four-year contract between the GM grower and Monsanto. It is a contract that is for the growing season plus the next three, as I understand it. I do not know the implications of that on all sorts of things including real estate value, including buying and selling property when you have still got this contract in place on the land. And I have not got anyone to answer me as to how I, if I am buying a farm, can do due diligence on what has been grown on that farm. Has it been GM and when and how far away is the nearest contamination point? There is some work still to be done in that area.

The CHAIRMAN: A farmer who grows conventional canola and has neighbours who grow GM canola has submitted to the committee that the incursion of GM canola onto his property has not resulted in any economic loss. He states the GM canola seed was eliminated along with weeds in the normal way when preparing for the next crop and that GM canola seed pods shatter, fall to the ground and are not recovered in the harvesting process. What is FOODwatch's feedback on this?

Ms COLLINS: One of my show-and-tells is having a look at the canola seed pod and the size of these canola seeds. I do not know how you can be sure, so I question again—has he tested? I do not know if the committee has seen these little test kits. This, again, was a failing in the implementation of GM, in that the education of the public was not there. There was an accreditation seminar for the GM grower, which I attended and I have my own opinion on the value of that, but there was not any education for anybody else. I tried to get a test kit myself. This costs \$8 a pop. You can only buy them in bulk—100 at a time—so for me as a member of the public wanting to test, say, roadside spillage near my house, it is cost prohibitive. I do not know what these people are doing. Who is

testing? How does he know the claims that he is making? And when he delivers to CBH, what is he saying then? There is a document that you need to sign to say that there is no GM. Has he been saving any seed? Because, again, there is a risk of that being contaminated. He should not be saving it. Monsanto actually has a zero tolerance for saving GM on your farm knowingly.

[12.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Are you aware of farming practices currently being followed in the agricultural industry which ensure successful segregation of GM and non-GM material which prevents contamination from occurring?

Ms COLLINS: No. While the coexistence guidelines and audit checklist remain non-mandatory, it is unachievable. Even in the tightly controlled trials, we have seen escapes of GM wheat and volunteers continuing to germinate, like in Tasmania, where there is still GM canola coming up.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee has received evidence from some submitters 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 they believe GM contamination in Australia has become a contentious issue due to the organic standards being too tight. What is FOODwatch's position on these two statements?

Ms COLLINS: Domestic and international markets want zero GM tolerance in organic. The department's guidelines at the time of the implementation of GM were recognised for zero tolerance and, although not mandatory, did put guidelines in place to help manage and mitigate that risk of contamination. GM crops at the moment are being driven by chemical corporations. If we look at the regulators, they are all there, pretty much, and they jointly seem to operate like a cartel through CropLife, as a strong lobbying group. We have health issues—you name it. You can flick through the front pages of *The West Australian*—we have asthma, allergies, eczema, cancer, mental health issues, Parkinson's. We have got a lot of health issues at the moment, and the government has inherited an unsustainable health system and is currently conducting a review to see what can be done about that. What is coming out of that review at the top of the list is preventive actions. We have got to do what we can to analyse the cause of our unwellness and to prevent it happening. If we keep just kicking in with the diagnosis and treatment, the health budget will just keep burgeoning out. I have been watching what is happening in the States, because they have been growing GM for a few years before us here. Talking to paediatricians in emergency departments, various of them have changed now to work in integrated medicine because they want to fix the problem before it occurred. It is too late if you just have to deal with the problem after the children are coming to emergency departments. What they are now doing is looking at the gut and the microbiome and seeing what is happening there, and looking closely at the food. In the States, a lot of them are recommending in the first instance a GMO-free diet, then given that there are more specialists on a case-by-case basis as to what each child may want, but they are presenting increasingly with adult diseases at an earlier age. I think we have to look at our food system to question what is happening there.

The CHAIRMAN: Just to bring you to the point here, you do not accept that a zero tolerance standard is unreasonable or too tight?

Ms COLLINS: It is absolutely what we want. We must trust our food system. The organic standard has a quality system in place, and if you design quality in, it is there, you can see what the standard is, and you can see that it is being audited. That is the sort of trust that we want.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we will move on to the issue of principles for farmer protection legislation. Are you able to outline the process by which the principles for farmer protection legislation were developed?

Ms COLLINS: With consultations over a number of years with consumers, farmers, scientists, medical professionals, lawyers and NGOs across Australia and around the world. We have had tens of thousands sign our petitions over the years and we have held marches through the streets for our farmers, our food and our future, to support the farmers who grow the food that we want to eat, which currently—I say currently—does not include GMOs.

Hon COLIN HOLT: Is it based on any other legislation anywhere else?

Ms COLLINS: I will have to take that on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: What feedback did you receive from peak farmer bodies such as WAFarmers and the Pastoralists and Grazers Association?

Ms COLLINS: I actually question “peak farmer bodies”, given that in this case the combined membership of WAFarmers and the PGA, as has been reported in the media, is less than 50 per cent of farmers. They have failed to support the organic sector; and hearing from conventional farmers who perhaps were members, they have left.

The CHAIRMAN: I suppose the question is, you can debate whether they are peak farmer bodies or not, but the question is what feedback did you receive from WAFarmers or the PGA regarding the proposed farmer protection legislation? Were they involved at any level in the development of your proposed legislation?

Ms COLLINS: I personally joined the WAFarmers Leading Ladies group to try to understand more about WAFarmers’ policy. Leading Ladies was about connecting city and country and healing the divide between city and country and teaching the next generation where their food comes from. I was elected to the committee. Discussion of GMOs was closed down. We were not allowed to discuss GMOs. There was little opportunity to engage.

[12.29.40 pm](#)

[12.30 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Are you aware of any feedback that FOODwatch has received from these peak bodies—self-described, perhaps, as you have characterised the peak bodies of WA Farmers and the PGA—regarding the proposal for this farmers protection legislation? Do you have any awareness of this?

Ms COLLINS: Just what is in the media.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to take that on notice and perhaps get some feedback from others within FOODwatch to find out whether or not there was any consultation or feedback sought from those organisations by FOODwatch on these proposals?

Ms COLLINS: Sure.

The CHAIRMAN: What are the types of possible losses that a farmer might suffer as a result of GM contamination that you as FOODwatch envisage they would be able to claim and be covered by any compensation fund?

Ms COLLINS: Again, there are upfront costs of risk mitigation, of testing, cleaning contaminated paddocks, animals being downgraded from eating GM incursion and if they were pregnant there would be generational impact coming through in the offspring, loss of earnings due to quarantining and cost of audits and the soil repair, and potential impact on real estate value. I have heard of seed

cleaners that have closed their business pre-emptively seeing that they would not be able to keep GM out of their system.

The CHAIRMAN: What rate does FOODwatch believe any levy should be set at and why?

Ms COLLINS: There have been some numbers put forward but we are a consumer group and GM-free farmers themselves would be best placed to set a rate. But the GM industry, in fact, could propose collection points, such as at the time of seed sale and potentially at any points that Monsanto currently collects fees. It should not be much of an impost to collect.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that feeds into the next question about the principles referred to—a requirement for GM seed merchants to pay a levy on seed sales into the fund. The question is: is it FOODwatch's position that the state government—given your reticence to answer questions regarding legal issues, I do not know if you have an answer for this—has constitutional power to charge GM seed merchants a levy on seed sales into any proposed fund and that it does not constitute an excise duty, which only the commonwealth has the power to raise?

Ms COLLINS: Yes, I have seen this argument come through as well, but we have examples of other state-based levies, such as roads and traffic licensing, so I think we can look at models elsewhere. I think we need to look at a review of all the points of where we might be able to actually get back some money such as—a review of all the points of GM subsidies, the incentives and tax concessions that are given to GM, have a look at whether there is double or triple dipping going on, and check whether the support to the GM sector compared to conventional GM-free and organic is commensurate with what the market wants, with market values, and farming improvements. GRDC comes to mind. I have heard it said potentially non-GM and organic farmers have to pay a levy to go towards GM research that will put them out of business. I will leave you with that thought and just say that GM is an expensive technology and it carries huge risks now and into the future because it is a very powerful technology understanding DNA and the genome and all it can do across species. They are using antibiotic resistance markers and they are using viral promoters and the consequence of all of that being released to the environment I am not sure has been—it is a huge risk. Those risks may be disproportionate to the sound economic growth that we want to do in WA.

Hon COLIN HOLT: I have a quick question for you. I know that this inquiry is about compensation mechanisms and FOODwatch has outlined some legislation. I could not see in there about appeal mechanisms. If someone disagrees with the administrator of the potential fund, have you thought about an appeals mechanism for disputing that decision?

Ms COLLINS: Good question. I will need to take that on notice as well.

The CHAIRMAN: There are a couple of other questions here that we have not got to. We will put those on notice to you as well and there are some questions that arose out of the hearing that we had on 11 April that we will also put to FOODwatch to take them on notice. Do you wish to make a closing statement?

Ms COLLINS: Just that we have huge potential in Western Australia to be a leader with our quality food system here. I think we know a lot more today than we knew a few years ago about what is required to keep us healthy. A healthy economy relies on healthy people and a healthy environment. I applaud and thank the committee for looking into this because to be able to capitalise on quality food production here in Western Australia is very important.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms Collins, for attending today. 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. The committee requests that you provide your answers to questions taken on notice 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.

Hearing concluded at 12.37 pm
