

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA

200. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to today's media reports of falling GM canola prices as a result of European markets rejecting GM canola because Europe does not want GM products to enter its food chain.

- (1) Is it true that GM canola grown as part of the Barnett government trials was not purchased by any export market and was eventually sold to Riverland Oilseeds in Pinjarra?
- (2) Can the minister confirm whether Riverland processed the Barnett government GM canola and sold the resultant canola meal into the WA animal feed market?
- (3) Can the minister tell Western Australian consumers whether Barnett government GM products went into their food, including children's food, via dairy and poultry products?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

(1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. It is the first question that I think I have got from this member since he has been the shadow minister, which is fantastic to see. It caught me well and truly by surprise.

There was a range of points to the member's question. The first referred to information out of Europe on how it treats GM canola.

Mr P. Papalia: No. The first question was: is it true that the GM canola that you didn't sell overseas was sold into the Western Australian market via Riverland Oilseeds?

Dr K.D. Hames: It was his preamble.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Yes, it might have been the preamble that I picked up.

Mr P. Papalia: Just answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, you have had the chance to repeat it.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I will answer the question to the best of my knowledge. In terms of where the product is sold, I do not trace or track where the market sells its products. The Liberal–National government made the decision to allow farmers in Western Australia the option of growing GM canola.

Mr P. Papalia: Are you the food minister?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Can I make the point, please? They will not grow something that they cannot sell.

Mr P. Papalia: Are you the food minister?

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr P. Papalia: Is it Agriculture and Food or just Agriculture?

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, if you want to ask a question, you have that opportunity in here. I am not going to give you the opportunity at this moment to continue to interject before the minister has endeavoured to answer the first part of your question. I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Farmers simply will not grow what they cannot sell. What we have allowed them to do —

Mr P. Papalia: What about Western Australian consumers?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: For God's sake! It's a joke!

The SPEAKER: Member for Kalgoorlie, I am on my feet; I am sure you can see me from there. I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: We have allowed farmers to have the choice of growing GM canola in Western Australia. It has been approved federally; it has been grown internationally for more than 15 years. We made the decision to allow them to have that choice. They will not grow something that they cannot sell. They choose to grow something that clearly fits in with how they manage their farms. It is also not just about price. A lot of people have been talking to me about what price they can get for it. It is also about their farming system, weed control, management and so on. They will make those decisions themselves. They are very, very good businesspeople and they can do that. I do not know what went to Riverland Oilseeds. That will be up to the farmers if they

choose that company as a market. The member asked me whether the meal from that—that is, what is left once the oil has been crushed from the canola—goes into the local market. The answer is that I do not know. However, I will make this point. The member mentioned in his preamble the significance of Europe and its position on GM products. It is really interesting that a whole heap of soybean meal gets sold into Europe every year for stockfeed. Whilst we have this understanding that Europe has a sensitivity to GM products, it still buys significant quantities of soybean meal from international markets to go into its marketplace. People also view Japan as a country that is sensitised to GM, yet it is one of the biggest buyers of GM canola in the world. In terms of what is happening here, farmers will decide where they will sell their products. They make those decisions; they are good businesspeople.

I will also make the point that with respect to consumers, which was where the member's point was targeted—I assume the inference was that consumers do not have any choice in this—we have labelling laws, which the member's federal compatriots are in control of and are in the process of reviewing. I assume that the opposition has made a submission to that review on what should be in those labelling laws. Those laws require anyone who has a product with more than one per cent unintended GM presence to label it as such. We have labelling laws nationally that enable consumers to identify what is in the stuff that they eat. These products have been approved federally as being safe for the environment and for consumers. We have allowed the farmers the choice to be able to grow it. They are the businesspeople who will make the decisions about which markets they go to and which markets they do not go to. I come right back to this point: if farmers cannot sell it, they will not grow it.