

From:
To: [Environment and Public Affairs Committee](#)
Subject: Submission for the Inquiry into mechanisms for compensation for economic loss to farmers in Western Australia caused by contamination by genetically modified material
Date: Friday, 16 February 2018 11:16:43 AM
Attachments: [2017_09_29_16.49.49.png](#)
[2018-01-30_12_21_23-Gene Ethics - for a GM-free Australia - Posts.png](#)

Dear Honourable members of the committee, I wish to make a submission regarding the inquiry into compensation for economic loss to farmers in WA caused by contamination by genetically modified material. First and foremost I wish to make it clear that I oppose any compensation. No farmer in WA or anywhere in Australia has had their produce rejected by a buyer because it was non-GM and inadvertently contained some GM material. The only case that comes close is the well documented Marsh V Baxter. I think that we would all agree that the issue was really not Baxter (who did nothing wrong and grew his GM canola crop as he was supposed to) but rather the organic certifier. I would like to remind the committee that Marsh was not a canola grower, and had the certifier been reasonable they simply would have told him to remove the eight canola seedlings. His crops were unaffected, and none of his land retained any residues associated with GM crops. There is a good argument to be made that Marsh would have been better to have sued the organic certifier for rescinding his organic status rather than his neighbour.

My second point is that the organic industry sets its own rules. They can therefore say that pollen from GM canola affected their farm and rescinded their organic status. Or lateral water flow from a farm that once grew GM canola flowed onto their farm, thus rescinding their status. How can this be fairly determined when the organic industry plays by its own rules?!

My third issue with this proposal is that it sets a dangerous precedent. If an organic grower can seek compensation for GM material entering their farm, can any farmer then sue for weed seed, or insects or fungal spores coming onto their farm if they are economically impacted. Given that farm hygiene is often poorer on organic farms this should ring alarm bells for organic growers.

Finally I would like to state that even the most ardent opponents of GM technology acknowledge its safety. Bob Phelps from Gene Ethics for a GM free Australia is on record as saying that GM crops are 'highly scrutinized under rigorous federal authorities that govern GMO's', while Fran Murrell from MADGE is on record agreeing that the rat studies by the infamous Prof Eric Seralini were 'inconclusive' (please see attached). The simple fact remains that GM crops are as safe or safer than their comparable conventionally bred counterparts. The European Union, concerned about GM crops, commission 1783 studies. It is summarised in the following peer-reviewed journal article.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3109/07388551.2013.823595>

There has not been a recorded injury, let alone death from GM technology. The same can not be said of organic produce. Western Australia has benefited from GM technology with 350,000 hectares of Roundup Ready canola grown in the state last year (see attached, courtesy of Monsanto via Bob Phelps, Gene Ethics for a GM free Australia). This move to compensate organic growers is politically motivated. No analytical test can tell you whether the canola oil in your kitchen was derived from GM or non-GM canola. And for the record I am yet to see a bottle of organic canola oil, so I can not fathom how an organic canola grower could be affected when to my knowledge, there aren't any. Please, do the right thing and do not introduce a mechanism to compensate organic growers when GM material moves onto their farm.

Kind regards

Brian Duggan, PhD

