

From:
To: [Environment and Public Affairs Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to the Inquiry into mechanisms for compensation for economic loss to farmers in Western Australia caused by contamination by genetically modified material
Date: Monday, 12 February 2018 3:32:38 PM

Dear Committee,

Please note that I do not support a levy for compensation for economic loss to WA growers from alleged contamination by GM material.

Please note that I write with knowledge. For 8 years I was Chair of the Genetic Technologies Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) of the Canberra-based Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. GTTAC advises the Regulator on any risks of GM organisms to human health and environmental safety. I am a Professor (agricultural science) at UWA with extensive research interests across crop and weed science. I am very familiar with GM crops, including the WA commercially-grown GM crop, canola. On farm land that I own in the Kojonup area, on occasion we choose to grow GM canola.

GM crops are successfully grown on huge areas throughout significant parts of the world, particularly N and S America. In these areas, the GM crops are dominated by GM corn, soybean, cotton, with much smaller areas of GM canola. Only in Canada are large areas devoted to GM canola. In these and other areas, growers are free to choose between GM or non GM varieties. For these major crops, corn, soybean, cotton, canola, only a tiny percentage are “organic”. For example, it is my understanding that there is no “organic” canola grown in WA.

I consider the current situation in WA is logical in that WA growers have choice. WA growers can choose to become “organic” growers. For canola, WA growers can choose non-GM or GM canola. In my view there would have to be clear and logical reasons to institute any system that considers contamination of GM material with non-GM material (or vice versa) and claims of compensation. Of necessity, these issues will be quite specific, based on biological consideration on a crop by crop, case by case basis. Generalisations cannot be justified and any attempts to generalise can be rightly challenged on technical and other criteria.

Sincerely,
Professor Stephen Powles, FAA, FTSE