

**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:** Friday, 16 February 2018 7:56:30 AM

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Dear Committee,

I am writing to note that I do not support any new levy on growers or an unnecessary compensation scheme.

I would also like to ensure that the Committee considers the following facts in their deliberations:

1. GM technology has been shown to be safe and effective
2. GM technology has been used globally in agriculture and a range of other fields for decades
3. Other countries have GM and non-GM growers, side by side, without the need for levy schemes or compensation

I am part of a large farming company on the south coast, run by three generations of my family. We are not what you would call a boutique or organic farm, but that does not mean that we don't care about our children's future or the environment. We live in a wonderful community and make a significant economic and social contribution to our region. We employ a number of families and younger people in our business and care about their welfare.

My husband and I both have university degrees in environmental and agricultural sciences. We have a sound understanding of GM technology and would not use it if we thought it was unsafe. We grow GM crops on our farm to reduce our reliance on chemicals and to prevent weed problems. GM technology has been in use for decades with no adverse health or environmental outcomes.

We do not believe that GM contamination in organic crops poses any threat to those consuming or using those products. However we understand that some people would prefer organic products to be GM free. We believe the issue of GM contamination in Australia has become a contentious issue is due to the organic regulatory authorities standards being too tight. For all food products in Australia (a country with an enviable reputation for food safety), there is a very low tolerance threshold (not zero) for contaminants. The threshold percentage is determined by the scientifically measured threat of the contaminant to human health and the acceptance that many contaminants, although undesirable, occur naturally in foods. The Australian organic industry has set the tolerance threshold for GM contamination of organic food at zero, despite the fact that there have not been any proven harmful effects of GM consumption. This means that organic farmers in Australia are penalised for having even trace amounts of GM material in their products. In other countries the threshold for GM material in organic products is very low, but not zero, giving organic farmers some leeway in the case of accidental contamination.

We believe that a levy scheme or compensation for GM contamination is not the answer to this issue, instead we should look to setting a realistic tolerance threshold for GM material in organic food that provides organic farmers with a reasonable margin should accidental contamination occur.

In Australia we are very lucky to have access to a safe, reliable food supply, whether that be through organic or conventional farming practises. Let's encourage both practises and support all Australian farmers, rather than create ways of turning neighbour against neighbour.

Kind regards,

Alaina Smith