



Media Release

5 July 2002

GM Seeds of Truth? Farmers urged to question North American panel

A group of North American farmers travelling across Australia raise some valid questions about genetically modified (GM) crops, however Australian farmers are being encouraged to seek facts, according to Agrifood Awareness Australia.

"Australian farmers must seek credible and balanced information on GM crops in order to make informed decisions for their production systems," said Paula Fitzgerald, Executive Manager, Agrifood Awareness Australia.

"In 2001, 52.6 million hectares of GM crops were grown around the world, with the United States and Canada accounting for 74 percent of this," she said. "Such evidence suggests that North American farmers have had a positive experience with GM crops," she said.

"A study by the Canadian Canola Council - *An Agronomic and Economic Assessment of Transgenic Canola* - found that Western Canadian farmers have rapidly adopted GM varieties, with over 80 per cent of growers choosing GM canola in 2000," she said.

"The study which involved 650 growers of both GM and conventional varieties, found that growers chose GM canola because they saw benefits in easier and better weed control, improved yield, return and profit, and cost reduction," she said.

"Claims that Australian growers can receive a premium for non-GM canola need to be substantiated," she said.

"A recent report by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics (ABARE) indicates that there is only patchy evidence of premiums for non-GM grain and oilseeds in world markets, and that these premiums have not been large enough to offset the agronomic benefits of GM crops," she said.

"Australia can certainly learn from overseas experiences, but these need to be put into context and must recognise Australia's stringent regulatory framework and the various efforts being undertaken in the area of GM crop management," she said.

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For further information contact: Paula Fitzgerald on 02 6273 9535 or 0418 160 943.

Agrifood Awareness Australia is an industry initiative established in 1999 to increase public awareness of, and encourage informed debate about, gene technology. The organisation is supported by four peak bodies including the National Farmers' Federation, the Grains Research and Development Corporation, Avcare, and the Seed Industry Association of Australia.