



Media Release

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Beyond GM canola – a gene technology forum for the horticulture industry

A gene technology forum with a horticulture focus will be held next Monday (20 May) in Perth to provide growers, councillors and the community with information about research and development taking place in the horticulture industry.

“Much of the gene technology debate in Western Australia has centred around genetically modified (GM) canola,” said Paula Fitzgerald, Executive Manager, Agrifood Awareness Australia. “This forum aims to expand the current debate and focus gene technology in horticulture.

“Participants will gain a greater understanding of the science of gene technology, the regulatory framework, current research projects, the role of field trials, consumer perceptions, and how Australia sits in the global market,” she said.

The forums have been organised by Agrifood Awareness Australia with the support of Horticulture Australia’s AusHort Research and Development Program.

“In 2001, over 52.6 million hectares of genetically modified (GM) crops were grown around the world involving some 5.5 million farmers from thirteen industrial and developing countries,” she said.

“While there are currently no GM fruits and vegetables available in Australia, now is an ideal time for the community to obtain as much information as possible about this research, in order to make informed decisions,” she said.

“There is considerable gene technology research being undertaken in horticulture to improve crops such as bananas, lettuce, pineapple, papaw, passionfruit, tomato and mango,” she said.

“Much of this research is at least five to ten years away from commercialisation,” she said.

“Researchers are investigating in-built pest and disease resistance, and improved quality,” she said.

“Using gene technology, researchers not only develop GM varieties, but can also identify genes and their function, to produce improved conventional varieties,” she said.

Speakers at the event include Dr Simon Robinson, Senior Research from CSIRO Plant Industry, Dr Sue Meek, the inaugural Gene Technology Regulator, and Paula Fitzgerald from Agrifood Awareness Australia.

This forum is the third in series of five being held around Australia. The remaining forums will take place in Echuca and Launceston in upcoming months.

-Ends-

The forum will be held from 4.30-7.00pm, Monday, 20 May at the Technology Park Function Centre Theatre, 2 Brodie Hall Drive, Bentley, Perth. All media welcome.

For further information contact:

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