



## **GM activists – a high distinction or stunts and spin?**

GM activist groups - Greenpeace and MADGE, sent representatives to a major Western Australian farming conference last week to learn about real farming.

“It is ironic that groups that publicly say so much about agriculture finally took the time to learn what farming and food production is about,” said Paula Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Agrifood Awareness Australia.

“A Perth-based MADGE activist and letter writer declared at the event that she knew little about GM crops and that she was attending the WANTFA conference to gain information. This was a very interesting comment as she had just two days prior addressed a community forum in rural WA on the topic of ‘GM crops unsafe and unwanted’.”

Farmers who met with the GM opponents on their near week-long tour through rural and regional WA were surprised to learn that the travellers did not even know about the term ‘knife points’ in relation to no-till agriculture, and were unclear on what a legume is.

“After entering the WANTFA conference - suggesting they were from the rural press and then the Greens - and attempting to disrupt the event with an odd stunt (that failed), those opponents then took copious notes,” said Ms Fitzgerald.

“They were exposed to grassroots farming, with farmers talking about their experiences with different canola varieties, grown on different farms, with different soil, fertiliser and moisture profiles, mixed rainfall and the natural variation in results.

“The challenge for these GM opponents is whether, after attending a virtual half-day modern agriculture refresher-course, they manage to pass the exam or instead choose to skew the information gained to continue their campaign to deny WA’s farming sector a choice to plant canola varieties best suited to their individual farming systems.

“Greenpeace, Gene Ethics and MADGE have not only suggested that farmers are undertaking unsafe farming practices - which is completely irresponsible and misleading, but they are also trying to paint WA’s innovative farmers as people who follow failed techniques.

“The time is well overdue for urban, east-coast activists to realise that WA farmers are switched-on business people that operate with the best interests of their farmlands and the community at heart.

“Farmers are extremely adaptive and innovative. They employ a range of techniques that may change from season to season, but at the end of the day, WA’s farmers are striving to produce better food in a sustainable manner.

“If Greenpeace and MADGE pass their agriculture exam, they will support GM crops just as Greenpeace founder, Patrick Moore, has done,” she said. “Mr Moore was exposed to the facts on GM crops and quickly reached the conclusion that they play a critical role in producing more food on less land to feed our growing population in an environmentally positive manner.

“WA farmers look forward to a day without activist fairytales and hope they can soon attend a Greenpeace conference to present activists with graduation certificates in agriculture and food production,” she said.

- Ends - Further information: David Dawson 0428 782 266

*Agrifood Awareness Australia Limited (AFAA) is an industry initiative, established to increase public awareness of, and encourage informed debate and decision-making about gene technology. AFAA is committed to providing quality, factual, science-based information on the use of gene technology in agriculture to allow for informed decisions.*

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