

Victorian and NSW Governments support dairy industry view on GM choice

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Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) chairman Allan Burgess said today that the Australian dairy industry welcomed the decision by the Victorian and New South Wales Governments to allow the moratorium on GM canola to expire.

"The ADIC supports today's announcements on the basis that the moratoria were unnecessary market regulation and that individual businesses should have the right to choose whether or not to use new technology. This should be based on the best possible regulatory system governing food and environmental safety," Mr Burgess said.

"The dairy industry did not take a position for or against the use of GM canola, but simply advocated the right to choose.

"The dairy industry upholds the right of consumers, farmers and processors to freely choose what sort of products they use. This includes the capacity of industry to segment its markets into GM and non-GM to meet market requirements; and for farmers and processing companies to choose their preferred system of production.

"Historically, the Australian dairy industry had held a range of views about GM technology, with some groups advocating it, others resisting it and many undecided. However with the passage of time and a comprehensive information and consultation process with farmers and companies across Australia, a much deeper understanding of the issues amongst farmers has led to overwhelming support for market choice."

Mr Burgess said that the reality is that GM technology is being widely used in modern agriculture worldwide, and today's decision at least allows Victorian and New South Wales farm businesses to access this technology if appropriate, while maintaining a firm insistence on the safety of the public and environment, and the freedom of choice within the dairy supply chain.

"I hope other states now follow the lead of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland and remove unnecessary market regulation relating to GM plants," Mr Burgess said.

"Despite the fact that canola currently has very limited use in the Australian dairy industry (less than 1% of total feed for dairy cows), the ADIC recognises that the removal of the moratorium on GM canola will raise some questions in the market place. However the ADIC is confident that Australia's dairy industry has the customer relationships as well as the regulatory and supply chain processes that can effectively manage any market concerns or requirements.

"Dairy companies have established milk supply arrangements based on their market requirements and they will continue to work with dairy farmers to manage these arrangements. Dairy companies and farmers have made it clear that they will continue to meet the needs of their customers and a moratorium on GM canola was not necessary in this context.

"The dairy industry can now quite rightly make choices without unnecessary market regulation and we will deal with the future use of GM plants very carefully based on the best science and customer needs.

"Our customers, both in Australia and internationally, can be assured that the Australian dairy industry will continue to provide dairy products that meet their requirements, as it always has," Mr Burgess concluded.

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