



MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
MINISTER FOR ENERGY  
MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES  
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Choice to be given to NSW Farmers and Consumers: Macdonald

NSW farmers will be given the choice to grow the type of canola crop they want, putting them on a level playing field with overseas farmers for the first time, Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said today.

Minister Macdonald said amendments would be made to existing legislation in this session of Parliament – ending the four year moratorium on Genetically Modified canola crops.

“All of the existing strict health and environment assessments will be maintained at a national level through the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR),” he said.

“This Bill will establish an expert committee to assess whether an industry is prepared and capable of segregating GM and non-GM food crops.

“It’s important to note the Minister will have the power to refuse approval to cultivate a specific crop if an industry fails to meet the criteria imposed by the expert committee.”

Minister Macdonald said that NSW farmers had been missing out on valuable export opportunities to countries like Canada and the United States as a result of the failure to adopt GM canola.

“Market conditions have changed since the Act was introduced with GM canola now responsible for 70% of the world’s trade,” he said.

“NSW farmers will now have a choice as to whether they want to grow GM canola or not and customers will be able to decide whether or not they want to buy them – this is all about informed choice,” he said.

“This process has been thoroughly investigated over the last four years, several types of canola have been approved for sale by the OGTR, now is the time to act.”

Minister Macdonald said the move to allow GM canola to be grown followed a comprehensive review by a three-member panel chaired by former Nationals leader Ian Armstrong.

“This panel received 1375 submissions and conducted more than 30 interviews on issues associated with the marketing and trade aspects of GM crops,” he said.

“The review found that it was time for change and that farmers and markets wanted the choice. There is a confidence out there in the industry that it is time to move into the future on this important issue – while keeping the strictest of safeguards in place.”

Minister Macdonald said there were obvious benefits to allowing GM crops to be grown in NSW.

“To put it simply – our farmers have been missing out. Genetically modified crops are already grown in 22 countries by more than 10 million farmers and GM canola has a gross margin benefit of \$45 a hectare,” he said.

“GM canola will have a positive environmental impact as well. For example, the first genetically modified cotton crops grown in Australia produced a natural insecticide which, by the second generation, saw a reduction in pesticide applications of 75%.”

Minister Macdonald said NSW had been in close consultation with other states on the GM issue.

“We have had discussions with Victoria and South Australia and expect them to make their own decisions in due course,” he said.

“We understand that there needs to be a national framework, and we will continue to work towards that through the Primary Industries Ministerial Council.”

Minister Macdonald said the strongest safeguards would remain in place.

“The OGTR has carried out detailed assessments and found that GM canola is as safe for humans and the environment as conventional canola,” he said.

“GM canola will be segregated from non-GM canola – people will know what they are eating.

“Strict labelling laws will be in place and segregation of grains is carried out routinely in the Australian supply chain – for example more than 50 segregated wheat products are exported annually.”

GM canola will be available for the 2008 planting season on a limited basis.

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