



Media release

Australian agriculture – being left behind

Friday 15 February 2008

The Producers Forum says the release of the 2007 global GM crop statistics from ISAAA again highlights that the world is moving on - while most Australian farmers are being left behind.

"Despite Australian cotton growers leading the world in the GM era, farmers in developing countries are now leaving Australia's grain producers in their dust," said Mr Jeff Bidstrup, National Convenor, Producers Forum.

"The ISAAA report (found at: <http://www.isaaa.org>) shows that in 2007, the global area grown to GM crops was 114.3 million hectares, which is up by 12 per cent - or 12.3 million hectares - on the previous year.

Mr Bidstrup said the number of countries growing GM crops has also increased, a fact that activists ignore.

"We are repeatedly told by the doomsayers that Europe opposes GM crops; yet France, Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, Slovakia, Romania and Poland all grew GM crops in 2007, and the EU overall imports massive amounts of GM soy and corn."

Between 1996 - when GM crops were first commercialized - and 2007, the growth in the adoption of these varieties has increased 67-fold. Farmers in developing countries have leapfrogged Australia, with 11 million farmers in these countries growing GM crops – mainly cotton, corn and maize. Over 43 per cent of the total area planted to GM crops was grown in countries like India, China and Paraguay last year. Australian farmers have only been allowed to grow GM cotton.

"As a cotton grower, I am fortunate to be able to use the GM varieties. The huge global adoption increase demonstrates that other farmers around the world also see the value in approved GM varieties - but it is a sad state of affairs that most Australian grain growers have been denied a choice," Mr Bidstrup said.

All Australia's representative farming organisations - those that truly represent farmers' interests - are united in their position that it's time for the remaining moratoria to go, and have strongly congratulated the Victorian and New South Wales Governments for ending their GM canola moratoria.

Yet Mr Bidstrup is aghast at the South Australian government's recent decision, saying SA farmers are now stuck to the past.

"That decision appears to be a reaction to activist campaigning. If the flat-earth activism in South Australia, West Australia and Tasmania continues, I wonder what will be the next backward step?" he said.

Copies of the 2007 ISAAA global GM crop statistics can be found at: <http://www.isaaa.org>

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