

**14 March, 2008**

**Australian Seed Federation applauds GM canola decision by the NSW government**

The Australian Seed Federation (ASF) is very pleased with today's decision by Ian Macdonald to allow commercial production of GM canola in New South Wales.

The ASF is the peak organisation for the Australian seed industry and represents the interests of its members involved in the breeding, production and marketing of sowing seed at state, national and international level.

Chairman of the ASF Biotech Committee, Mr Keith Glasson, said the final go-ahead gives New South Wales canola growers more choice and the ability to compete at an international level, as is already the case for Victorian growers.

“Canadian growers have had access to herbicide-resistant GM canola for more than a decade resulting in improved productivity and adoption of more environmentally sustainable practices, such as reduced tillage.

“The lack of access to these technologies has put Australian canola growers at a distinct disadvantage. This remains the case in South Australia and Western Australia, whose state governments ignored advice from the scientific and agricultural communities, and in the case of South Australia, the recommendations of an independent review panel, and have not lifted their GM canola moratoria.

“The fact that over 80 percent of Canadian canola growers now plant GM canola is testament to the technology's on-farm benefits,” he said.

Mr Glasson said for the Australian seed industry, the decision meant seed companies would now have the confidence to invest in research and production of high-yielding GM canola varieties and hybrids. Although he said it was likely to take a number of years for significant commercial quantities of new GM canola varieties and hybrids to come through.

“Ultimate allowing commercial production of GM canola will provide more choice to New South Wales and Victorian canola growers,” he said.

“In Canada both conventional and non-GM herbicide tolerant (HT) canola varieties are still available more than 10 years after the initial commercial release of GM canola.

“So I expect Australian seed companies will continue to develop and produce conventional and alternate HT canola varieties in this country while there continues to be a demand for them,” Mr Glasson said.

“The ASF is confident in the grain industry’s ability to deliver choice to the market with GM canola. Canola seed preparation and quality will continue to meet the regulatory and industry requirements regardless of whether it is GM or not,” he said.

The Australian Seed Federation is a broad-based organisation with individual members active in the industry segment of their choice: conventional, organic or biotech.

**ENDS**

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