



MEDIA RELEASE

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GM canola - Momentous decision for WA agriculture

"This is a momentous decision that will put WA back up on the top of the list of efficient, competitive and sustainable agricultural producers."

So says WA farmer and National Convenor of the grassroots farm body, the Producers Forum, Rod Birch in response to the WA Government's decision on GM canola for the 2010 cropping year.

Today the Western Australian Premier, Colin Barnett, and the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Terry Redman, announced that GM canola could be grown from 2010 onwards.

Mr Birch applauds the Government's commitment to making such a favourable a decision based on facts, sound science and common-sense.

"This is logical, progressive policy. WA farmers need this globally proven and endorsed technology," he said. "We cannot afford to be shackled to the past. Our key competitors in Canada have had GM canola for 14 years and our colleagues in Victoria and NSW have now had it for two years.

"Essentially, we now have another tool in our cropping management kit. GM canola varieties will provide an effective and efficient alternative weed control system to control ryegrass, radish and other weeds.

"I'm now looking forward to getting on with the real business of 2010 cropping season and being able to have a choice in using another technology to assist my productivity, profitability and sustainability, and sell to markets around the world," said Mr Birch.

All gene technology research and resulting products are highly regulated in Australia to ensure human health and environmental safety. GM technology helps to deliver better agricultural products and practices, and GM crops for feed, fibre and food are a reality of everyday life – they have grown around the world since 1996. Where new GM approved varieties are adopted, the industry supply chain uses its established protocols and procedures to deliver product to market specification.

WA coordinator of the Producers Forum, John Snooke, urges the media and the community to discuss the decision using the facts of GM science.

"Just look at the experiences in Canada with canola and in Australian with cotton and canola," he said. "On 50,000 Canadian farms, more than 95% of the canola grown is GM varieties, and they're reaping the benefits of better weed control, less and safer herbicides, less tillage, less diesel use, and higher yields and profits - and their dominance of the worldwide canola trade speaks for itself.

"We cannot overlook how quickly canola growers in NSW and Victoria adopted GM varieties. In 2008, there were 108 growers and in 2009, there were 300 growers, and they planted around 40,000 hectares of GM varieties.

"Bring on the opening rains for 2010 in WA

"Today is a significant step forward for WA agriculture. We hope that in time the WA Government will take the next step and allow all OGTR approved crops to be grown in the State," he said.

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