

## **Chance misleads agriculture**

Press Release by Bill Crabtree 11<sup>th</sup> July

For three years, since 2004, WA farmers could have been growing GM canola with yields 20-40% more than their current triazine tolerant canolas. Through repeated mis-information to state parliament, and through the media, the Minister for Agriculture Honourable Kim Chance has been telling porkies and deliberately slowing the desire for farmers to embrace modern GM technology.

Recently released scientific papers of research work by respected "CSIRO-equivalent" Canadian scientists have shown a \$C100/ha benefit from growing Roundup Ready canola over conventional canola. The benefits came from better weed control, higher yields, less herbicide use and fewer costs. This explains why farmers in Canada have embraced GM technology faster than any other technology ever offered to them, beginning in 1996. Virtually all of their canola is GM now and it has become their "bread and butter" crop, displacing wheat as their main profit crop.

These are the key benefits that Canadian farmers obtain and are denied to Australian farmers. Is there any wonder why an ever increasingly number of educated and increasingly vocal farmers are calling for Chance to be sacked for misleading the Parliament and the state on the GM issue.

How has Chance misled? In Hansard alone, on 10-11th May, Mr Chance make 20 inaccurate statements about GM canola. These include:

1. there is no such thing as high-yielding (*GM*) canola at this stage
2. It is far more likely that oilseeds for biofuel will come from the likes of cranberries and mustards (*other than canola*)
3. we will never see GM technology adopted in this country
4. our herbicide resistance is fundamentally to the herbicide Glyphosate.
5. We should bear in mind that Canada does not have the advantage that Australia has in the use of triazine-tolerant canola varieties; that is, our standard variety is triazine tolerant

All these statements, and 15 more, are blatantly false and they have significant ramifications for our industry. Denying WA farmers the option to grow GM canola is, as UWA's Professor Alan Robson says, "asking them to farm with one arm tied behind their back."

WA is missing out on \$170 million per year and it is more likely triple this figure. Canola would quite quickly overtake barley as the second most popular crop, with the area grown likely to quadruple from 0.35 M ha to 1.40 Million ha within a few years, according to WA consultant Bill Crabtree. Once WA farmers grow GM canola they will embrace it rapidly over the whole state. "They will embrace it even more quickly than no-tillage which has helped them enormously during the dry 2000's". They will say to themselves "why did we listen to the sceptics for so long? Why didn't we go to Canada and see for ourselves? Why did I forfeit more than \$30,000 extra profit per year? Who fooled me for the promise of a market benefit that never eventuated?"

In five years time we will look back and say "why did we let the Minister mislead us for so long?" says consultant Bill Crabtree. For Mr Chance to save any face he must now immediately lift the moratoria, in consultation with the supportive grains industry. The first step must be to approve the request from the Esperance Shire to enable that region to embrace GM canola. This could begin, on a large area in 2007, and should be monitored for any possible issues that he may be realistically concerned for. The whole of the agricultural industry is ready to delay no more. The only obstacle is Chance. It is time to go GM in WA, says independent consultant Bill Crabtree.