

Being left behind - for sure!

Bill Crabtree 20th April 2005

Kim Chance's comment (Countryman 14th April) that if we went down the GM path that it would be irrecoverable is not true. His Agricultural Department's research work with the GM Basta (or Liberty) resistant lupins, about 10 years ago and all over the state, has not hurt us. It has had no negative impact on our lupin industry. There is no problem having GM crops growing side by side other crops, even next to organic growers - as happens in the US and Canada. It is a matter of what % level of the other variety are we comfortable with. The EU set their standard at 0.9% of GM presence - this is easily achieved in broadacre agriculture.

It is unfortunate that Kim Chance does not promote GM technology in the positive light that those who practice it worldwide do - in increasing amounts. Canadians have preserved their other herbicides in a profound way with GM canola and with a 30% increase in grain yields. This is why we now struggle to compete with them in canola growing.

How can the so called "green movement" possibly be anti GM? This technology has the potential to reduce green house gases, stop stubble burning and the associated wind and water erosion, enable crops to efficiently grow fuel for our cars and recycle carbon dioxide, help heal the ozone layer, reduce our reliance on imported fertilisers and much more. This agricultural technology does reduce our reliance on herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and many other 'cides' (frost, drought, floods etc). Our children will not be exposed to the more harsh pesticides - with cotton growing in NSW there is an 87% reduction in insecticide spraying with GM technology. This enables children to play with much greater safety. GM has proved so far to be both "clean and green".

Come on Green People stand up for good science and environmentally friendly technology. Don't be swayed by poor logic - think it through and learn more of the issues for yourselves. Don't trust emotional unfounded articles published on the internet - seek sound advice from people trained in this area who are respected. Sure, we need to be cautious and have checks in place - which I believe we do with the OGTR (office of gene technology regulator). Not all GM ideas will work, like with conventional breeding there are many varieties of plants that do not get up.

It is unfortunate that Minister Chance will not meet with myself, along with two other high profile and respected WA scientists, to discuss the GM issue until September 2005. This is a year since I first requested a face to face meeting - I feel this is unreasonable. With this approach we will be left behind for sure - without a Chance!"