

## **Sensible GM standards needed**

Bill Crabtree - 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Mr Engelke is obviously concerned about GM technology (Countryman 5<sup>th</sup> May 05). It would add useful depth to the debate if he could visit US, Canada and South America for himself. Or even if he could begin dialog with mainstream sensible farmers over there, not just the organic or 'different' fringe groups. If he went there, like I have many times and have taken many farmers with me, then he would see the massive embrace that has occurred with GM technology. This has been to the farmers advantage - otherwise they would not go there. They don't want to go back to weedy fields - they have no resistance to speak of, they get better yields with GM varieties, that is why our price is dropping.

The state Upper House members trip to North America seems to me to have been a political stunt. I have downloaded and read their document. I can not agree that GM technology is a controversial issue with farmers in North America - except for fringe groups. This touring group visited several organisations that are anti-GM. This is not hard to do. In contrast, the past President of the US corn growers association spoke to 500 agronomists and leading farmers at the Perth 2005 Crop Updates and he farms GM corn alongside his organic corn growing neighbour. It works! He just needs to talk to his neighbour, and it relies on sensible levels of contamination.

This contamination cuts both way. WA farmers, right now, are losing money from not being GM and segregation is a matter of what percent is sensible! I would take the 30% extra yield and pay 2-3% of this profit for segregation to the 1% level.

The terminator gene comments are not accurate. This technology is not being used. Your comments about having to buy the seed every year are also not true, this is the case for hybrid canola (GM or otherwise - even now). Roundup Ready can be kept and used the next year. Percy did this illegally and was fined for it as his farming neighbours were not impressed with him cheating the system. With GM canola the technology use agreements allow farmers not to pay for acres destroyed by flood, frost or other such disasters.

Mr Engelke, you do not need to be frightened by this technology. Sadly, the mis-information and fear that the Minister for Agriculture is generating is not helping to educate the public with this smart technology. Ten years of worldwide experience with GM technology is effecting a profound good. The EU is importing hundreds of thousands of tones of Canadian GM canola every year as a specialty oil.