

Letter to the Editor  
Bill Crabtree, Northam - 21<sup>st</sup> June 2005

### **The real concerns with GM**

Most farmers seem to have two main concerns with GM canola. It might make Roundup resistance worse and I might be controlled by the chemical companies. So what has happened elsewhere in the world with these issues?

Has it made resistance worse? Absolutely not! The 10-year evidence from North and South America, from what I have seen first-hand with those 80 who have traveled with me, shows the opposite is true. GM technology reduces herbicide resistance as it decreases the reliance on Roundup, trifluralin, atrazine and selectives. This is also the report of a visiting weeds specialist from Canada recently.

GM technology affords a third knockdown in Liberty (used as Basta in the horticultural industry in WA). This gives us the option of a triple knock - being much more powerful than a double knock. For more on these thoughts see my article presented to the Perth Crop Updates in Feb 2005 and displayed at [www.no-till.com.au](http://www.no-till.com.au) under GM issues.

Being 'controlled' by a chemical company is not a real concern. It would be no different to what happens now with John Deere, Commonwealth Bank, SGIO or Hungry Jacks. You would still have free choice with which company you might work with.

Even now if a farmer wants to grow a hybrid canola and gain the extra 30% grain yield (15% over TT plus 15% hybrid benefit) he has to pay the seed company \$17 per kg. And then he has to grow it in a low weed burden paddock and use his limited and valuable selective herbicides in the crop. I work with some clients who do this now on small areas.

The comment by Minister Kim Chance that we might grow a tail if we eat GMs (West Australian, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, page 5) is absurd and embarrassing. Even more sad is his comment that Peter Lee was being delusional to suggest that he had said so (Farm Weekly 9<sup>th</sup> June).

The comment that 'we should wait until something of real GM benefit comes along' is naive and wishful thinking! Those that say herbicide resistant GM crops are of little benefit should visit the perfectly clean fields of the rest of the GM world. Weeds can take 50% grain yield and force a less profitable paddock phase of 2-3 years. GM with herbicide resistance would enable continuous profitable rotations with ease - as happens now where.

I heard Vanessa Stewart, on ABC radio, report a discussion she had with a US farmer, he said "young lassie, a farmer who can't throw a party on the 4<sup>th</sup> July is a good farmer with Roundup Ready". We are being left behind - make no mistake!