

GENETICALLY MODIFIED WHEAT — RESEARCH

1222. Hon RICK MAZZA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

The Grain Industry Association of Western Australia recently downgraded the expected total tonnage of this year's harvest by 1.5 million tonnes, following a similar downgrade in October—the cause being frosts.

- (1) Is the minister aware that Victorian scientists discovered an antifreeze gene in a plant in 2006 and that these scientists inserted this gene into a test plant?
- (2) Is the Department of Agriculture and Food WA conducting research into frost mitigation in Western Australian wheat crops?
- (3) If yes to (2), does this research seek to use modern gene technology to exploit this antifreeze trait in commercial wheat crops, now that the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act 2003 has been repealed?

Hon MARK LEWIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Department of Agriculture and Food scientists have been aware of this trait since it was first published in 2009.
- (2) Yes; DAFWA is playing a key role in the Grains Research and Development Corporation's National Frost Initiative. GRDC, along with DAFWA in WA and other research partners nationally, increased investment in frost research in 2014 to establish the GRDC National Frost Initiative.
- (3) DAFWA has had discussions with the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics and GRDC to evaluate reputed GM sources of frost tolerance. An application has been lodged with the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator for field trials in 2017, with sites in WA.