

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA — LIABILITY LEGISLATION

106. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the minister representing the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the government's decision to allow trials of genetically modified canola. If the green light is given to cropping across Western Australia —

- (1) Will the government consider putting in place strict liability legislation ensuring that GM companies are liable for containing their product and any financial losses arising from their failure to prevent such containment?
- (2) With the likely coexistence of GM and non-GM canola crops, will Western Australian farmers and consumers have to accept the inevitability of contamination rather than prevent it?
- (3) Will the minister ensure that the compulsory public registration of GM grain producers occurs?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY replied:

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

The Minister for Agriculture and Food advises that no decision has been made to allow trials of GM canola. However, in answer to the member's question —

- (1) The government is not considering the introduction of strict liability legislation. Australian and international reports have concluded that common law is sufficient to deal with any issue that may arise from growing GM crops.
- (2) Coexistence is expected to enable the supply of non-GM canola. In 2005 the Primary Industries Ministerial Council agreed to an Australian threshold level of 0.9 per cent adventitious presence of GM canola in non-GM canola grain. This threshold enables coexistence of non-GM and GM crops, and the standards are being used this year in Victoria and New South Wales.
- (3) This option may be considered along with other marketing and public interest issues if these trials proceed. Whichever process is agreed to will be an open and transparent process.