

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA TRIAL — WONGAN HILLS

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

I refer to the government's current genetically modified canola trials and, in particular, the Wongan Hills trial site.

- (1) What was the documented objective outcomes expected of the Wongan Hills GM canola trials?
- (2) What were the methodologies by which the Wongan Hills trials were to be assessed and measured?
- (3) Was this trial site designated to measure the comparative performance of triazine-tolerant, Roundup Ready and Clearfield canola varieties?
- (4) What involvement did Department of Agriculture and Food staff have in the measurement and assessment of the levels of germination of canola species and potential weed species at the trial site?
- (5) What was the involvement of departmental officers in forming a judgement that the trial was unlikely to produce meaningful results?
- (6) What significant reasons have been provided to the department on why the trial was aborted at such an early stage in the growing season and how did these limit the usefulness of the site for radish control research data in local field conditions?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) There were two trials. The aim of the wild radish efficacy trial was to evaluate the performance of the Roundup Ready canola system in the control of wild radish. The aim of the systems trial was to compare the performance of the Roundup Ready, triazine-tolerant and Clearfield canola systems.
- (2) The wild radish efficacy trial was to be assessed by sequential visual inspections and weed counts. The systems trial was to be assessed by yield of canola grain.
- (3) Yes.
- (4)-(5) There was no departmental staff involvement in the conduct of these industry-managed trials and Nufarm informed the department of its decision to discontinue the trial. The department agreed that this was an appropriate course of action, given the poor crop germination and variable weed emergence. The department has the role of a monitor and auditor of the 2009 GM canola trials.
- (6) The crops had poor germination across the triazine-tolerant, Roundup Ready and Clearfield canola varieties. In addition, poor radish emergence at the site limited the use of the site for assessment on the efficacy of wild radish control.