

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS — ACCIDENTAL PRESENCE ARRANGEMENTS

102. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to future sales of farms in Western Australia currently growing genetically modified crops with seeds purchased from Monsanto.

- (1) If a farmer, who is currently growing GM crops with seed purchased from Monsanto, sells his farm, would the new landowner have to pay royalties to Monsanto for any seeds left, unintentionally or intentionally, on the property after the sale?
- (2) After the sale, if the new landowner chooses to grow non-GM crops, and self-seeded GM plants from previous seedings contribute to the crop being over the 0.9 threshold, will a premium or royalty be required by Monsanto?
- (3) Does the sale of a farm completely extinguish the GM contract with that farm?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. It is a good question in some respects because it is an opportunity to point out some facts. I might add that when the member puts out his media releases, he is quite short on facts on many occasions. I think it is a chance to lay out some facts.

The inference in the question is that if a farmer grows GM canola, in this case, and then sells his farm, he is under some seed contract obligations to companies that provide those seeds as a part of growing GM seeds. If he sells his farm to someone else who then wants to take up growing non-GM, what are the contractual obligations for the second person? I might highlight it was the Labor Party that put in place, through Hon Kim Chance, a 0.9 per cent level of adventitious presence to segregate GM from non-GM. It is a point I have highlighted in this house many times, and a point that seems to be lost on the member for Collie–Preston. A farmer has the choice, under the Liberal–National government, to choose to grow a legal GM crop that is approved by the federal Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. They have the choice to make that decision, and they do. This government and I have no regrets about making that decision.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, I am sure we would be interested to hear the answer to the question if the minister could be heard above some members. I formally call to order for the first time today the member for Cockburn.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The whole reason that level of accidental presence is put in place is for the exact same reason the member asked the question; that is, if someone else therefore chooses to grow a non-GM crop and purchases seed—which, in the case of non-GM, has to be less than the 0.5 per cent level of GM to be considered non-GM—and grows that crop, they would not meet that threshold. That is something industry has researched and supported at a national and international level as the standard accepted in terms of accidental presence. Therefore I have every confidence —

Mr E.S. Ripper: If it happens to go beyond the threshold, what happens? Answer the question!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I am. I have every confidence in the processes industry has put in place because it reflects international standards in terms of managing the segregation issue. The member put the point: when a farmer chooses to grow non-GM, if there is accidental presence, is he obliged to pay some sort of contractual arrangement to the company that provides that seed? I have consistently asked questions of seed companies, including Monsanto, to highlight that they will not pursue someone who is taking on GM through an accidental presence arrangement. They have never pursued anyone who has accidentally had GM in part of their crop.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I want to give you a chance to answer this question, minister. I formally call to order for the first time today the member for Warnbro.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: To summarise, farmers in Western Australia have the choice to grow GM or non-GM. I have every confidence in the processes in place that reflect an international standard in order to maintain the segregations necessary to meet that choice. I have every confidence because I have spoken to the necessary people and sought their assurance, and quite rightly so —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The second point I make is that I have every confidence in the processes put in place to maintain that segregation—processes that were supported by the former Labor government, and processes that are supported by its federal colleagues. Hon Tony Burke came out and supported the position of looking at technology to support agriculture in Western Australia. The state Parliamentary Labor Party's position is an absolute contradiction of what the federal minister said when he was the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. I will ask a question of the member for Collie—Preston: what will be —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: There are some people in this place who would like to ask some questions. I would like to give them the opportunity to do so. The longer this question goes on, the fewer opportunities other people in this place have. I do not know whether you have further comments to make, minister?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Just one.

The opposition needs to state its position in regard to GM canola in Western Australia when we go to the next election, because it does not have a position!