

ROUNDUP READY CANOLA, AVAILABILITY TO WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GROWERS

7. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

Given the decision of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to approve the commercial release of Roundup Ready canola and that there is only about three weeks left in which to plant seeds, I ask -

- (1) Will Roundup Ready canola be available to growers in Western Australia this season?
- (2) If not, when will it be available?
- (3) What process is in place to allow Western Australian growers to proceed with large-scale trials of Roundup Ready canola?
- (4) Does the State Government see any impediments to Western Australian trials of genetically modified canola by biotechnology companies in the long term?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Roundup Ready canola will not be available to growers in Western Australia this season. Monsanto Australia Ltd, along with Bayer CropScience and the Australian Oilseeds Federation, has proposed commercial-scale demonstration trials in the eastern States but have yet to get state government approval in those States. Both companies had previously given me an undertaking that they would not pursue a commercial release in Western Australia in 2004.
- (2) Responses to the Government's public consultation on the need for ministerial orders under the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act 2003 are currently being assessed. I expect to be able to announce my decision, which will impact on the future of commercial release of GM canola varieties in WA, before the end of March 2004.
- (3) Monsanto and Bayer are considering conducting only small-scale trials in WA in 2004. I have discussed with both companies the conditions under which small-scale trials of GM canola might be exempted from a ministerial order made under the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act. I expect to receive firm proposals from the companies in the near future. The Department of Agriculture has drafted protocols to help determine the conditions that should apply to field trials for marketing purposes and for monitoring the trials; however, the conditions will generally be similar to those which apply to Office of the Gene Technology Regulator-approved field trials for GM canola and which applied to those trials that have been carried out in WA.
- (4) Both companies have indicated to me a reluctance to continue active trial programs if they cannot see a pathway towards commercialisation in WA. The companies might view a ministerial order prohibiting the commercial cultivation of GM canola for a number of years as an impediment to further trials.