

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FARMERS FEDERATION, GENE TECHNOLOGY GRAINS COMMITTEE

105. Hon JIM SCOTT to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

- (1) Is the minister aware that the Western Australian Farmers Federation grains council has passed a six-part motion that includes a recommendation to the Primary Industries Ministerial Council that the Gene Technology Grains Committee be restructured to provide proportionate representation of both GM and non-GM growers?
- (2) Is the minister further aware that the WAFF president has represented the decisions of the federation's grains council to the federal Minister for Agriculture by claiming that the motion "was not WA Farmers policy", despite the issues raised in the motion being already incorporated into a WA Farmers Federation policy statement?
- (3) How will the minister ensure that the Primary Industries Ministerial Council is accurately informed of the true position of WA farmers?
- (4) Will the minister ensure that an avenue to the PIMC is provided for voices of non-GM growers in WA to be heard?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

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

- (1) I am aware of three motions carried at the WA Farmers Federation grains council meeting held on 13 and 14 October 2003. Motion 2 stated that there be a restructure of the Gene Technology Grains Committee to more adequately reflect the agricultural industry rather than accept significant influence by the GM industry. This includes proportionate representation by both GM growers and non-GM growers to decide the specific farmer related sector of the supply chain management plan.
- (2) The grains council president provided me with a copy of his letter on the matter to the federal Minister for Agriculture, Mr Warren Truss. Mr Truss has not yet brought the matter to the attention of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. I am aware of the claim that the motion of the WA Farmers Federation grain council "was not WA Farmers policy". As I understand it, WAFF policy has to be ratified by the organisation's annual general meeting, and that meeting is to be held next week. I expect the issue to arise at that meeting and the motion to be voted on. This is really a process matter for the WA Farmers Federation and not a matter for me to comment upon further.
- (3) I will be happy to inform the next Primary Industries Ministerial Council of the WA Farmers Federation policy position at its next meeting in May 2004.
- (4) The Gene Technology Grains Committee is not appointed by government and its membership is its own business. The ministerial council does not rely solely on this committee for advice in relation to policy on GM crops. It is the responsibility of ministerial council members to consult within their jurisdictions. I take pains to consult widely on matters of GM policy and would be surprised if non-GM growers felt that they had not received an adequate hearing. Indeed, I have raised many issues at the Primary Industries Ministerial Council on behalf of farmers and others in the Western Australian community who believe that all the issues concerned with the potential release of GM crops have not been satisfactorily resolved to date, and I will continue to do so.