

ORGANIC FARMERS — PROTECTION FROM GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

3777. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

- (1) Organic farmers in Western Australia are facing the task of maintaining their certification. Will the Minister assist farmers to ensure their certification is maintained?
- (2) Being familiar with all organic agricultural standards, why has the Minister not put in place 10km buffer zones to protect the organic growers from the threat of genetically modified (GM) canola?
- (3) As it is not mandatory for farmers growing GM crops to tell their neighbours that they are growing GM canola, how are organic growers who are within a 10km boundary of a GM crop to be informed of their neighbours' intentions?
- (4) What course of action will the Minister recommend that farmers who grow GM free crops take if they are not able to maintain their certification as an organic grower?
- (5) Who will pay for any GM crop audits that are undertaken, and what is the expected cost of the audit?
- (6) Why are the audits not mandatory?
- (7) What was the required number of audits based upon?
- (8) How often will the audits be conducted?
- (9) What sort of information does the Minister expect to extract from the audits?
- (10) In the 2009 trial to minimise spillage farmers growing GM crops were required to use wide adhesive tape to prevent leakage on trucks. Is this procedure still in place; and,
 - (a) if not, why not; and
 - (b) if yes, is this procedure the industry standard?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (1) Yes
- (2) The experience derived from the successful coexistence of organic and GM growers in New South Wales and Victoria in 2008 and 2009 demonstrated there is no need for a 10km buffer zone around GM canola crops to protect organic certifications.
- (3) The Department and the Minister have written to all known certified organic/biodynamic growers and all known canola growers. The known certified organic/biodynamic growers were asked to make their neighbours aware of their status and canola growers planning to plant GM canola were asked to notify their neighbours.
- (4) The Government has confidence in the WA grains industry's ability to segregate GM canola to meet the specified threshold levels. The 2005/06 review of the Commonwealth Gene Technology Act 2000 concluded that common law allows for effective remedies for persons incurring damage from GM crops.
- (5) The Department of Agriculture and Food will pay for the GM crop audits and it is expected the audits will cost in the vicinity of \$200,000.
- (6) The Department's biometrician has determined the statistically significant number of audits required to assess ongoing compliance with the procedures required to ensure effective segregation. This number of audits can be obtained through a voluntary process.
- (7) The number of audits required was calculated (based on the advice from the Department's biometrician) as being the number which provided assurance of the compliance of the GM canola grower with the conditions of the licence and stewardship agreement.
- (8) Each participating grower will be audited at least once.
- (9) Information on the extent of GM canola grower compliance with the conditions of the licence and stewardship agreement.
- (10) No.
 - (a) The 2009 GM canola trial was a trial to assess ability to segregate. The outcomes of the trials and experiences from the coexistence of GM and non-GM canola in NSW and VIC have demonstrated there is no need to continue to require taping of trucks to ensure effective segregation.

(b) Not applicable