

MONSANTO AUSTRALIA LIMITED, COMMERCIAL GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

1532. Hon J.A. SCOTT to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

- (1) Is the minister concerned that the proposals by Monsanto Australia Limited to grow commercial genetically modified crops in Western Australia will undermine the current investigation into genetically engineered and genetically engineered-free zones in Western Australia?
- (2) Is the minister also concerned that it will undermine the clean, green image of Western Australian agricultural and horticultural produce?
- (3) What steps will the minister take to ensure that the Monsanto application does not destroy the GE zoning process in Western Australia?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) Monsanto Australia Limited has taken the first step of applying to the Interim Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. However, I am advised that the regulator has not yet determined whether the application is in compliance with the requirements for her acceptance. Consequently, details of the application are not yet available, and it is not yet clear whether the application applies to areas of Western Australia. In any event, assuming that the application is acceptable, the process of dealing with the application is expected to take at least seven months and include two rounds of extensive public consultation, with the opportunity for input by the Western Australian Government. I expect that within this time frame, the State's Gene Technology Bill 2001 will be enacted, along with amendments to the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976 to enable the making of regulations to designate certain areas for genetically modified and non-GM crops for the purpose of section 21 of the commonwealth and state gene technology Acts. I also expect that by that time, the gene technology ministerial council, of which I am a member, will have issued a policy principle under section 21 of the commonwealth Act. It is also my intention to continue to consult with all interested parties on this matter. Should this Government reach the conclusion that the commercial release of GM canola poses unmanageable risks to the marketing of the State's agricultural crops, it would be prepared to take action under the national gene technology regulatory system and use its power to declare GM-free zones within the State. In reaching a conclusion on this matter, I can assure the honourable member that this Government is very conscious of the need to protect the well-earned reputation of this State's agricultural and horticultural produce. Our agricultural exports make a massive contribution to the economy of this State, and no Government can afford to let that be put at risk.