

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA CROPS — CROSS-CONTAMINATION POSSIBILITY

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

With reference to the trials of Genetically Modified Canola being grown in Western Australia, I ask:

- (a) who is conducting the trials;
- (b) is it purely Agriculture Department staff and the appointed farmer;
- (c) what role will the seed producing companies be having in the trials;
- (d) how closely will the trials be monitored to assure that they are conducted under true scientific theory; for example, control crops using non-Genetically Modified seeds;
- (e) can we be assured that the trials and control plots use the same fertilizer quantity, same weed control, same soil type, same pest eradication program;
- (f) how close to the trials using Genetically Modified seed will the control plots of non-Genetically Modified seed be to each other;
- (g) will neighbouring farmers' crops be tested for contamination of Genetically Modified seed; and
- (h) will permission need to be obtained from the neighbouring farmers before their crops can be tested?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (a)-(b) The trials are being carried out by the selected trial farmers and members of the grains industry — Monsanto, Nuseed, Pacific Seed, and Pioneer Hi-Bred. Staff from the Department of Agriculture and Food will audit all trial sites and will also be involved in the demonstration sites to be planted at the Department's Geraldton and Esperance Research Stations. Staff from CBH will be involved in the receival, transport and export of the harvested grain.
- (c) The seed producing companies, Nuseed, Pacific Seed, and Pioneer Hi-Bred, will supply the GM canola seed to be planted in the trials. Seed company personnel will also carry out "weed walks" with the trial farmers to assess the effectiveness of weed control with Roundup herbicide.
- (d) The trials are to be managed under the Roundup Ready canola stewardship program. This program addresses environment, technology, market and agronomy objectives. All farmers using the technology in 2009 will be accredited.
- (e)-(f) The aim of the trials is to assess whether or not the grains industry can effectively segregate GM from non GM canola. The management of the on-farm trials will be in the hands of the relevant farmers. Grains Research Development Corporation will include Roundup Ready varieties in National Variety Trial (NVT) evaluations at the Esperance Downs Research Station and other trial sites. NVT's are carried out using protocols to ensure that, as far as is possible, all breeding lines can perform to their genetic potential, and that performance is not compromised or affected by any factor except the growing environment at the trial site.
- (g)-(h) A GRDC funded gene flow study which will involve extensive sampling will be undertaken during the 2009 Roundup Ready canola trials. Fields will only be entered where permission is granted.