

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS - CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

71. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the minister's comments following recent reports of liver damage in rats after they have eaten genetically modified corn. I refer also to the minister's indication that Australia undertakes no independent analysis of data supplied by GM companies.

- (1) Can the minister outline any plans he has in place to ensure that Western Australia has a certification system?
- (2) Does the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food have a certification system in place for agricultural produce?
- (3) Given the necessity for certification of agricultural produce such as grains and meat, if no to (2), why not?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for providing some notice of the question.

- (1) Assessments about the health and safety of genetically modified foods are the responsibility of the commonwealth government and are undertaken by Food Standards Australia New Zealand. In making these assessments, FSANZ does not undertake its own feeding trials to determine whether a genetically modified food is safe; rather, it relies on data supplied by the company that has made the application for the approval of the GM food. Despite approvals by FSANZ of GM foods for human consumption, the Western Australian government is aware of concerns held by many in the community about the safety of GM foods. This is why the Western Australian government has funded its own independent long-term animal - a rat in this case - feeding trial to gain data on the safety, or otherwise, of GM food crops. The government is also in the process of working through a range of other issues associated with GM technology, in consultation with industry, through the GMO Industry Reference Group. However, I believe it is necessary that a single international scientific body, which is independent of the GM proponents, provide food safety analysis for consideration by national food regulators.
- (2)-(3) Not applicable.