

GENETIC MODIFICATION FREE ZONES DISCUSSION PAPER

**1002. Hon J.A. SCOTT to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

- (1) Does the minister stand by the information contained in the Department of Agriculture's discussion paper on genetic modification free zones, despite its containing factual errors about the benefits of genetically modified crops?
- (2) Why did the discussion paper ignore many important factors that are likely to have major negative impacts on the State's economy?
- (3) Is the minister concerned that the Department of Agriculture continues to claim that the adoption of herbicide tolerant soya bean is associated with small increases in yield and a significant decrease in herbicide use, despite the comprehensive study by Benbrook of the University of Idaho finding that the opposite is true?
- (4) If yes to (3), what does the minister intend to do about the incorrect information in the department's publication?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I am extremely grateful to Hon Jim Scott for providing some notice of the question.

- (1) I am unaware of factual errors in the discussion paper.
- (2) The purpose of the consultation process is to determine what form GM or GM free zones might take and how they would be managed. If managing GM or GM free zones proves to be a complex task, it follows that regulatory and compliance costs would probably be high. Submissions from industry are expected to provide input on the complexities or otherwise of these zones. The purpose of the discussion paper was to raise issues important to these considerations in a balanced way, not to prejudge the outcome.
- (3) The Economic Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture was the source of information on soya bean yields and profits in the discussion paper. Furthermore, official USDA figures show a steady year-on-year reduction in herbicide use on soya beans from 1990 to 1999, despite the growers switching en masse to GM soya beans.

Hon J.A. Scott: Will the minister table that documentation, because I do not think that is correct?

Hon KIM CHANCE: I will make every endeavour to source that information, provide it to the member and table it if he thinks it necessary. The answer to (3) continues -

The main drawcard for growers with the GM soya beans is superior weed control with products like glyphosate. Without going into detail, I am advised that studies cited by Benbrook do not adequately deal with the issue of chemical weed control.

- (4) I expect the department will correct the discussion paper should any misinformation become apparent.