

PROPOSED GENETICALLY MODIFIED COTTON TRIALS

**362. Hon JIM SCOTT to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

I refer to the proposed genetically modified cotton trials by Western Agricultural Industries Pty Ltd and the Department of Agriculture in the Kimberley.

- (1) Does the GM cotton seed contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* transgenes?
- (2) If so, are the transgenes either the synthetic cry1Ac or cry1Ab genes, which have been implicated in cattle deaths in Belgium?
- (3) Will the trials use the Mon 810 variety of CaMV35S promoter, which is implicated in the illness suffered by Philippine farmers exposed to GM pollen?
- (4) If not, can the minister inform the House what type of cry protein will be used; and, if it requires the use of a promoter, what type of promoter?
- (5) Have these transgenes been proved to have genetic stability?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I advised Hon Jim Scott that an answer to this question was not available, but I do have part of an answer. Clearly, when dealing with matters as complicated as *Bacillus thuringiensis* transgenes and the Mon 810 variety of the CaMV35S promoter, I would love to be able to drag an answer off the top of my head, but I am afraid I cannot.

Hon Sue Ellery: You're a bit slack.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I know. Mea culpa. The question raises several serious health and safety issues. I am aware of the effect of this promoter. Under the national regulatory framework for gene technology, the Commonwealth's Gene Technology Regulator is responsible for assessing and managing risks to human health and safety. Cotton trials in the Kimberley - whether the east or the west Kimberley - are licensed by the regulator. Honourable members may or may not be aware that as yet in the northern cotton zone, unlike in the southern cotton zone, there is no approval for commercial GM cotton, although at this stage that is under analysis by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. However, trials are being carried out and have been since about 1995. I intend seeking the regulator's advice about the issues raised and request that the honourable member either put this question on notice or ask it at a later date.