

**GOVERNMENT BILL PROPOSES TO DEREGULATE SOME NEW GENETIC MODIFICATION (GM) TECHNIQUES AND GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs)**

Dear Farmer

A bill has been presented to Parliament that is trying to deregulate some new genetic modification (GM) techniques and the genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) that are produced as a result, by classifying them as non-GMOs.

Do you know what that could mean for you?

Deregulation means that there is no requirement to tell you that the crop you are planting contains one of these new GMOs.

The genetic sequences developed using these techniques will be patented. This means that wherever these sequences land, they can be covered by patent rights.

One of these new genetic sequences, called dsRNA, can be sprayed. The patent can extend to the crop and the grain produced by the crop. Spray drift from your neighbour could result in your produce being affected by patent rights. If fruit trees or vines are sprayed with patented dsRNA, the patent could extend to the fruit or grapes produced, for the life of the plant.

The patent-holder can enforce their patent rights. In the USA and Canada, this has resulted in farmers who were contaminated with past versions of GM crops, being sued for growing GM crops without a licence.

The situation in Australia could be worse. Under our existing end-point royalty system, a positive test of the patented material in a farmer's product gives the patent-holder the legal right to deduct their user fee from the farmer's produce payments. Even a presence of as low as 0.01% could result in a positive test, and any subsequent action against the farmer is entirely at the patent-holder's discretion. Farmers that object to this fee being deducted from their payments will need to take legal action against the patent-holder to try to recover their money.

If a GMO spreads to the fields of an organic farm, the farm could also lose its organic status.

If Australia deregulates these GM techniques, it does not mean that importing countries have also deregulated them. In many countries, these products will still be considered as either approved or unapproved GMOs.

If a contaminated export from Australia arrives at a country that has not approved that GMO, the import can be refused. There were 200 cases of trade disruption due to unapproved GMOs between 2002 and 2012, resulting in serious consequences for some exporting countries, including the permanent loss of export markets. Losses have been in the billions of dollars.

If the export is contaminated with a GMO that is actually allowed into the food supply of the importing country, most food will be required to be labelled as GM in that country and subject to major consumer and market rejection.

Take GM wheat as an example. Although varieties of GM wheat have been available for years, it has never been commercially grown anywhere in the world, due to massive market rejection. Any escapes of GM wheat varieties from old trial sites are quickly

eradicated, but have still caused markets to cease trading with areas where contamination was found. Any introduction of GM wheat into Australia therefore risks losing an industry that is worth \$7.1 billion per year (5-year average).

GMOs are living organisms. Once a GMO is released into Australia on a commercial scale, it will spread and it cannot be recalled. It will be like trying to recall cane toads, blackberries, lantana or rabbits. Therefore, any impact could be permanent.

How is it then possible to recall a GMO if it causes economic loss? Who will be liable for any losses? Will the Federal Government indemnify you against any losses, immediate and on-going?

How will your industry manage these new GM varieties, when they are not considered as GMOs in Australia, but will be considered either as approved or unapproved GMOs in countries that Australia exports to?

Given there have been numerous cases of GM wheat trials in America causing contamination and immediate cancellation of all wheat orders from the area concerned, who will be liable for any economic loss to Australia's \$7.1 billion per year wheat industry if it is contaminated with deregulated GM wheat varieties?

More information can be found in the attached scientific briefing paper, written in everyday English.

If you are concerned, please send an email to the following people expressing your concern and asking "for Gene Technology Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Regulations 2019;12 to be blocked, by, for example, withdrawing the legislation, voting against the legislation, or disallowing it". Tell them that you want these new GMOs to be regulated. Tell them that you want them to be identified as GMOs through the supply chain so that you have a choice about whether to use them or not. Tell them how you and your industry could be impacted if they are deregulated.

Senator Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment.  
[Senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Mark Colton, Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment. [Mark.Colton.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:Mark.Colton.mp@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Madeleine King, MP, Shadow Minister for Trade. [Madeleine.King.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Madeleine.King.MP@aph.gov.au)

Senator Rex Patrick, Spokesperson for Environment, Trade and Investment, Centre Alliance Party.  
[Senator.patrick@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.patrick@aph.gov.au)

Senator Jordan Steele-John, Spokesperson for Trade, the Greens. [Senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.steele-john@aph.gov.au)

Senator Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Agriculture, and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate. [Senator.mckenzie@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.mckenzie@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Resources.  
[Joel.fitzgibbon.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:Joel.fitzgibbon.mp@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Rebekha Sharkie, Spokesperson for Agriculture, Centre Alliance Party.  
[Rebekha.sharkie@aph.gov.au](mailto:Rebekha.sharkie@aph.gov.au)

Senator Janet Rice, Spokesperson for Agriculture, the Greens. [Senator.rice@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.rice@aph.gov.au)

Please also feel free to look up your local member of Federal Parliament and any Senators from your State to send them a similar email. A list of Federal Government politicians can be found here:

<https://www.aph.gov.au/~media/03%20Senators%20and%20Members/32%20Members/Lists/MemList.pdf?la=en>

Please feel free to send this email and the attached scientific document to other farmers.

Yours sincerely

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