

The dangers of GM

Industry comment

The GM contamination issue is of concern to the organic industry and conventional export industries alike. Organic industry members have their say on the consequences it may have going forward.



Graham McNally, managing director, Kialla Pure Foods

I am extremely concerned for the future of the Australian organic grain industry as these incidents create serious issues for the authenticity and creditability of our organic grain and grain products. I am bewildered as to why the Australian grain industry would place the whole of its seed

production needs in the hands of so few whose ideals are to return the highest profit to their shareholders. Farmers will be ever dependent on these GM companies for their seed needs.

Andrew Youngberry, director, Country Heritage Feeds

My question to the legislators is "who pays?". Is it always the case that those in authority make decisions that are expedient and in line with the wishes of multinational companies and when the very predictable outcome happens the little bloke is left carrying the bag? The organic industry needs protective legislation so any contamination issue, no matter how small, is paid for by those who desperately wanted GM crops with little thought for Australia's clean and green organic status.



Alan Druce, grain grower, Alan Druce and Co

"Once we have GM in our system it will be extremely difficult to control. Similar to releasing the cane toad – once you have it, you can't get rid of it. It is regrettable that unproved experiments are let loose into the eco-system when nature already provides a perfect and complex system of soil

ecology and plant structure which well managed organic practices show works best.

Scott Kinnear, BFA board member and GM spokesperson

We need to watch the investigation very carefully. If, as we suspect, some conventional seed lines are contaminated then we will immediately need to inform any organic growers of canola who may use or have used these lines. Current crops that are found to be contaminated should be destroyed and farmers compensated – preferably by Bayer (the owner of the gene). If farmers have previously grown



canola that may be contaminated they will need to monitor those sites for volunteer canola regrowth with a view to destroying the regrowth. In addition cereal crops should probably be avoided until the canola has effectively been removed. Otherwise there may be an admix contamination problem with GM canola.



Clinton Starr, BFA and OFA director

In the recent canola incident in Victoria, a number of people argued that we should not be overly concerned because the quantity of GM canola discovered was extremely small and is an approved variety in a number of countries. Those comments completely missed the point that we were unable to completely segregate our supply

chain, and we would have been unable to warrant complete traceability in terms of GM/non-GM. Some export orders, vital to all farmers, could be prejudiced in the future unless the conditions of complete segregation and traceability can be successfully managed. This is quite apart from the important issue of seed testing. Even worse was the fact that the variety had not been present in Australian trials since the late 1990s, thus suggesting that GM crop traces could turn up randomly at any time in the supply chain, unbeknown to those managing it. This is not an area of activity where random events such as this can be allowed to occur. They could well be prejudicial to the interests of organic and conventional producers alike.

Tim Marshall, environmental writer and trainer

Anyone who thinks contamination can be controlled must have never driven around rural Australia at harvest time. Everywhere trucks are going past paddocks containing non-GM crops, possibly organic crops. Grain spills on to the roadside and it becomes hard to avoid hitting the feeding parrots. I always said GM is "brought to you by the same people who brought the so-called 'green-revolution' crops". It serves the same interests and has the same flaws. This time the problems they have introduced have the ability to self perpetuate.

The people who introduced thalidomide, DDT and 24-5T swore that they were safe. My early (18th century) edition of *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, by Jethro Tull, indicates he thought his 'new technology' would "exterminate weeds in England, as surely as we have the wolves". If we can't keep GM in the laboratory, it will bring new consumers to organics, but will we end up bearing the cost of seed testing and compliance?

Visit < www.bfa.com.au > for regular GM media releases.

