



Western Graingrowers

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Cunderdin GM "Contamination" Allegations

Ian and Jodie James from North Cunderdin have used Green's MLC Lynn MacLaren as the conduit through which to make an official complaint of "contamination" from their neighbours' GM canola crop (due to hail and rain). On 11 November, MacLaren's in-house Greenpeace employee, Louise Sales, issued a sensationalist media release which concluded:

"Farmer protection legislation is urgently needed to protect non-GM farmers from economic losses if GM contamination does occur," concluded Ms MacLaren.

WGG Chairman John Snooke responded with a media release and gave an interview on the CountryHour in which most of the sensationalist claims were effectively addressed. Since then, the issue has died down somewhat, but Greenpeace and MacLaren's office continue to lobby for a compensation fund. To date, no legal filings have occurred in the Kojonup case, and we believe that the James case is even weaker than the Marsh one.

WGG encourages farmers who are growing or considering growing GM canola in their rotations to not let the noise of anti-GM campaigners deter them from making sensible decisions about what crops they use.

Greenpeace Activity in WA

Greenpeace has been manifestly active in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia since last year when the Marsh issue at Kojonup arose.

They are apparently using local people opposed to GM (like the Marshes and Jameses) to advance their global anti-GM agenda. As we have stated publicly on several occasions, Greenpeace and their cohorts litigate issues in the media.

In reality, the allegations of "contamination" have no legal standing, but in the absence of proponents speaking out, the emotive allegations are effective in the court of public opinion.

PGA has been positively recognised in the Wheatbelt for our strong stand on this issue. It is imperative that we continue to actively engage with politicians and in the media, unabashedly advocating for advancement of the science and applauding the success of genetic modification.

CBH Harvest Management

While quality issues continue to dampen spirits throughout the wheatbelt, the size of the 2011-12 harvest will be significantly higher than average.

Curiously, CBH has been active in the rural media and throughout the wheatbelt in criticising current above-ground rail contractor, ARG, for not running enough trains to handle the volume. Most observers of the WA grains market were predicting a crop well above average as far back as August/September. Given that, under the existing contract, the onus was on CBH to order the appropriate number of trains, we wonder:

Did CBH miscalculate the size of the WA crop and therefore not engage sufficient capacity from ARG to service the task?

OGTR Approval of Bayer GM Canola

WGG made a submission earlier this year supporting Bayer CropScience's commercial release of InVigor x Roundup Ready canola. We are pleased that the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator last week granted a licence permitting that InVigor Canola lines and GM Roundup Ready canola, which were separately assessed and approved by the Regulator in 2003 for commercial release. The introduced genes enable the plants to grow in the presence of glufosinate ammonium and/or glyphosate. We are pleased that Bayer has taken the time and trouble to get another GM canola approved in Australia, and look forward to the product being available on the market.

National Representation

Grain Growers Limited continues to attempt to claim the National Representation space. They are a cash-rich remnant of government-controlled grain handling in the East, and have never represented WA growers. In addition, because the Eastern grain trade is domestic-focussed, Grain Growers have little to no experience in dealing with export issues. WGG are opposed to their attempts to be the "single voice" of grain producers.

On these or any grains issues, WGG Chairman John Snooke welcomes your questions, comments or input. He's available on the numbers below or via email at jsnooke@bigpond.com.

The WGG wishes you a happy Christmas (despite the harvest conditions!) and a safe and prosperous 2012.