

Australian States Reject GM Food Production

No GM food production this year

Australia is set to remain a GM free food producer for another year. Even if a first GM crop variety gains approval later this year, there will be nowhere to plant it.

Federal authorities are considering applications for market approval of GM canola. However, as they do, state governments have stepped in to prevent GM release in their territories.

Two key concerns appear to be driving state governments and food industry support for these measures: market rejection of GM foods and the costs and limitations of segregation systems.

State moratoria

To date, five of Australia's eight states have introduced or are in the process of introducing moratoria on outdoor GM food production (see below). These 5 states cover all regions where canola is grown. Measures range from a specific ban on GM canola to moratoria on all GM food crops. Many farming and trading associations are also driving the effort to keep GM free food production.

New South Wales

■ The New South Wales **Government** has introduced a **three-year moratorium** on outdoor GM food production.¹

Western Australia

■ **Western Australia** currently has a five-year moratorium on GM food production in place, and is introducing legislation that will allow for the designation of GM free crop areas. This includes powers to designate the entire state a GM Free crop zone.³

“Tasmania’s reputation for its clean and wholesome foods is much deserved but has been hard-won and nothing should be allowed to threaten it. The extension of the moratorium is all about protecting that good name.”

Minister of Primary Industry, Water and the Environment, Press Release, 27 February 2003

“There have been concerns about the impact of the commercialisation of GM Canola on Victorian export markets. These issues need to be satisfactorily resolved before we can confidently move forward.”

Victorian Minister of Agriculture, 8 May 2003

“Our agricultural exports make a massive contribution to the economy of this State and no government can afford to let this be put at risk. We currently have a five-year moratorium on the introduction of GM food crops that will remain in place until we are certain that risks to our agricultural markets are addressed.”

Western Australian Minister of Agriculture,
25 February 2003

Victoria

■ In May, the **Victorian Government** announced a **one-year moratorium** on GM canola commercial release.³

South Australia

■ The **South Australia Government** obtained a voluntary agreement from the cropping industry not to release GM canola this season.⁴ Since then, a Parliamentary Select Committee has recommended that GM food release only be approved if a series of outcomes can be satisfied, including a segregation system that guarantees market requirements for non-GM food will be met.⁵

Tasmania

■ In February, **Tasmania** extended its moratorium on GM food production until 2008. The moratorium was introduced in 2001.⁶

July 2003

¹ Premier of NSW, Press Release (4 March 2003) Labour's Policy on commercial release of GM food crops.

² Minister of Agriculture, Western Australia, Media Statements 4 April 2003, 25 February 2003 and May 30 2001.

³ Victorian Department of Agriculture (8 May 2003) Press Release.

⁴ Statement by Agriculture Minister Paul Holloway on ABC news, 9 May 2003.

⁵ Parliament of South Australia, Select Committee on Genetically Modified Organisms, Final Report, 17 July 2003.

⁶ Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment (February 2003) Gene Technology Policy Review Position Paper.



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