



## Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers

Professional practitioners in the landscape industry

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From the National Administrator

15th February, 2008

Dear Mr .....

AILDLM is a professional body which represents a broad range of landscape professionals, ranging from horticulturists to landscape architects Australia-wide. With our involvement in both the built and natural landscape we rate the preservation of our environment very highly on our list of priorities and responsibilities.

We are particularly concerned about the Victorian Government's proposed lifting of the moratorium on 3rd March on the growing of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). GMOs have not been rigorously tested and the economic, health and environmental consequences of the release of these crops into this country are unknown and irreversible.

Unlike the process of natural selection and selective hybridisation which is the basis of all breeding programmes to date, GMOs could never occur naturally. Their production is contrary to the laws of nature and subsequently little, if anything, is known as to where this may lead.

Of particular concern is the potential for GMOs to hybridise with other plants, including our own native plants with the potential to reduce biodiversity. Australia, as an island continent, is in a unique position to maintain genetic purity. Canadian farmers, who have been down a similar road of change are urging us to be cautious about introducing GMOs into our environment. Transgenic pollen, which in most cases is invisible to our eyes, can be wind-blown over very large distances and deposited elsewhere, or fall directly to the ground and is a major source of transgenic contamination. Contamination is generally acknowledged to be unavoidable, hence there can be no co-existence of GE and non GE crops.

GM Increased weed problems and the use of greater amounts of stronger herbicides and pesticides are also possible due to plants' and insects' ability to adapt and become resistant to these products. The active gene which is in Roundup Ready Canola can be transferred to weeds through cross fertilization making these weeds immune to conventional spraying programmes. Official US Department of Agriculture data states that herbicide and pesticide use has increased from 1996 – 2004. This is the period when GM soy, cotton and corn have been widely grown in USA. (Benbrook, "Genetically Engineered Crops and Pesticide Use in the United States: The First Nine Years, October 2004) This directly contradicts the claims of the Monsanto that GM crops reduce the need for herbicides. This contradiction alone should be ample grounds to withhold release.

Australia is a wealthy, technologically advanced nation and should use its bounty and expertise to show the rest of world that we care for the future of our planet and the biodiversity which has allowed our broad range of food and ornamental plants to adapt to a wide variety of situations. Independent research has shown that GM Cotton will produce greater yields under favourable conditions but performs poorly in less than favourable environments (Qayam and Sakhari, "Did Bt Cotton Save Farmers in Warangal?, 2003). Even without the onset of global warming climatic conditions in Australia are extremely variable and rarely ideal.

We urge the Victorian Government and all other Australian Governments to continue the moratorium on all GMOs in order to preserve our nation's natural and farming heritage. Once we venture on the GM path there's no turning back.

Yours faithfully

Arthur Lathouris FAILDM  
President – AILDLM