

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT



DON'T PLAY SILLY POLITICS WITH FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS – SUPPORT FARMER CHOICE

18 May 2016 – The parliamentary debate on securing farmer choice in Western Australia is welcomed, however playing silly politics with farmers' livelihoods by unnecessarily extending debate to delay or entirely prevent the vote on the GM moratorium repeal bill is outright irresponsible. The WA Labor Opposition should put politics aside for the sake of the state's farmers and the success of WA agriculture.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of Australia's plant science industry peak organisation CropLife Australia, today said "putting narrow misguided party politics ahead of good policy is irresponsible when so many growers rely on the choice of making farming more profitable and more environmentally sustainable with GM crops."

"It's also disappointing that those opposing this sensible change are making outright factually inaccurate claims to support a flawed argument. The overwhelming scientific evidence and facts means the WA Labor party will one day have to change their position on GM crops; it's about time political grandstanding ended and some leadership and commitment to WA's future farming success is shown on such an important economic issue."

"Repealing the *Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act 2003* (WA) means WA producers and farmers can have full confidence to choose whichever approved crop suits their land and business model, and ensures no WA farmer loses out," said Mr Cossey.

Mr Duncan Young, WAFarmers Grains Section President, said WA's farmers should not be denied the right to choose a crop breeding technology that is safe and approved and used by their international competitors.

"Nearly one third of WA's canola crop is grown using genetically modified canola. There is a market for GM crops domestically and internationally and party politics should not stand in the way of securing farmer choice for it," Mr Young said.

Mr John Snooke, GM spokesperson for PGA of WA, said the urgent repeal of the redundant Act is crucial for WA's growers.

"Playing political games may provide politicians with media attention but at what cost? They're putting at risk the livelihood of so many growers of GM crops who need to know if they'll be able to choose to grow GM canola next season. Growers should be put first in this debate, not narrow political interest," Mr Snooke said.

Repealing the Act has been recognised as crucial to the goal of doubling the value of the grain industry to \$10 billion a year over the next decade, as outlined in the *WA Grain Industry Strategy 2025+*, and for a more productive Western Australia farming future.

Mr Cossey said GM and non-GM canola has been grown side-by-side successfully and productively without creating marketing issues. "The bulk grain handlers that currently segregate GM and non GM canola in Western Australia have a proven ability to segregate the two grain types throughout the entire storage, handling and transport supply chain from receival site to end user," said Mr Cossey.

"Organic farmers are still making their premium while farmers using GM canola are making the most of the weed management benefits and increased yields biotech seeds provide them. With the repeal of the antiquated moratorium, WA farmer choice will be protected regardless of the farming method. The Opposition needs to stop playing silly political games with this important debate and instead support the state's farming future," concluded Mr Cossey.

To support farmer choice in WA visit www.farmerchoice.org.au

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