
GM cropping decision poses no risk to South Australian wine industry

16 November 2020 (CANBERRA)

Commentary on ABC 891 radio this morning suggesting the South Australian Government's recent decision to allow GM crop cultivation across all of mainland South Australia poses a risk to the South Australian wine industry is completely without foundation, distorted and false.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia said, "Comprehensive and detailed analysis on this issue, along with the real-world scenarios in every other wine producing jurisdiction on mainland Australia and around the world, shows that simply allowing farmers to adopt the more environmentally sustainable and productive innovation of GM cropping does not impact, and has not negatively impacted, on wine producers or the marketing of their product. Nor has it negatively impacted on any other farmers, including organic. The hysterical nature of some of today's commentary is completely detached from any reality and devoid of fact. Those perpetrating these falsehoods are the ones who actually pose a risk to the industry and should give consideration to being more circumspect in their public commentary.

"There's a lot to be proud about when it comes to Australian agriculture. Our farmers and farming practices are world's best and now South Australia has enabled its farmers to have a great leap in sustainability by allowing access to GM crop innovation. To suggest the removal of an antiquated GM Crop moratorium will have a negative impact on the marketing of South Australian wine is obtuse at best and deliberately mischievous at worst. It's the high-quality produce that draws a premium, right across agricultural commodities, including South Australian wine.

"Expert agricultural economists, Thomas Elder Markets, undertook comprehensive consideration of whether the cultivation of genetically modified crops in wine growing regions would have an impact on the marketability of the South Australian wine industry. [Their report](#) is conclusive in its findings. It is demonstrated that co-existence is possible between wine producers and broadacre growers choosing to grow GM crops and there is no negative impact on either."

Mr Cossey continued, "The real-world evidence of wine exports from Western Australia, the largest GM canola producing state in Australia, shows that the GM status of a region does not impact on achieving a premium price for the wine produced. In addition, there are no wine producers within South Australia using South Australia's current GM-free status as a marketing tool. Nor have they ever, highlighting further the hypocrisy of some of today's commentary. Wine Australia's analysts themselves recognised in 2017 that a GM-free status would be unlikely to influence grape price and would not be expected to play a role in any premiums or discounts.

"This latest report supports expert analysis published in 2018, which found that the GM moratorium in South Australia has not led to enhanced premiums over comparable markets for South Australian farmers. This was found for canola, wheat, barley, wine grapes, wool, cattle, sheep meat and lamb. The 2019 Anderson report also clearly showed that the GM moratorium had a cumulative cost of \$33 million to the state's canola industry from 2004-2018, with no tangible trade or marketing benefits.

"The data is comprehensive and clear, mainland South Australia's agriculture industry, including wine production, has not benefitted from the moratorium. The premiums received by South Australian growers and producers are based on the high-quality of their products, owing to their expertise and dedication, not because of the GM crop moratorium.

"Wine Australia even said it themselves, 'It is the view of the industry analysts at Wine Australia that a region or state's status as 'GM-free' would be unlikely to have an effect on grape price and therefore would not be expected to play a role in premiums or discounts to any states'.

"Those charged with marketing specific South Australian wine regions might do better to focus on the real challenges facing their industry and those facing agriculture more broadly in the current trade environment, rather than attempting to create absolutely false problems.

"The lifting of the GM crop moratorium will not adversely impact the South Australian wine

industry or grape production or the marketing or trade of such products, domestically or internationally. It will simply allow South Australian growers to be on a level playing field with their interstate and global competitors. GM crops provide growers with greater opportunities to manage their crop rotations, minimise crop losses, maximise yields and improve profitability while reducing their usage of pesticides and to be more environmentally sustainable,” concluded Mr Cossey.

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Contact: Dr Anne-Sophie Dielen | 0468 633 954 | annesophie.dielen@croplife.org.au

About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$20 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

