

## **Stop Genetically Engineered food crops: Australia's next cane toad**

In recent years, a handful of multinational chemical companies have engineered new kinds of crops that could never occur in nature. These GE crops pose unacceptable risks to human health, the environment and the economy.

Against the interests of other states, the Victorian and New South Wales Governments recently announced they will allow their bans on GE food crops to expire end February 2008. The decision from South Australia is also pending. As a result, Australia is now on the brink of losing its green GE free status and economic advantage forever.

This decision will allow the commercial release of GE canola. Like cane toads, the release of GE canola would be irreversible, as GE canola crops can cross state borders and contaminate non-GE canola crops. It will remove choice from farmers who want to remain GE free.

No systems of segregating GE canola crops or contamination control have yet been devised. Therefore no State government should lift its GE ban without the agreement of all that will be affected.

Experience in Canada, has shown that GE canola will actually cause farmers to use more herbicide not less. GE canola 'super-weeds', resistant to up to three different sorts of herbicide, have become serious problems for Canadian farmers, who must now resort to highly toxic sprays to control them.

Australian canola farmers are about to lose their GE-free reputation and our major export markets in Asia and Europe will be at risk. GE canola will find its way into our food as canola oil and meal, yet will remain unlabelled, placing our health and our children's well being at risk. Canola is used in a wide range of food products from breakfast cereals to margarine to bread.

While other countries are turning their back on GE crops, Australia is opening its doors. Despite industry claims, the promised benefits of GE crops have not materialised. GE crops represent a lucrative business for a handful of multinational agro-chemical companies and are a significant risk for the rest of us. Farmers will no longer be able to save their own seeds and will have to annually buy them from the agro-chemical companies.

Australia's GE free status should not be undermined by the unilateral actions of any one or more state governments acting alone. By allowing the release of GE canola, Victoria and New South Wales will be conducting an uncontrolled national experiment with our environment and our health. This will change the face of Australian agriculture forever.

**We the undersigned call on all heads of State and the Federal Governments to unanimously extend bans on Genetically Engineered food (GE) crops for at least 5 years, and to introduce thorough liability legislation to ensure farmers and consumers are protected from unwanted GE contamination.**

**We also demand the recent Federal election promises are delivered – to protect human health and the environment and ban the growing of GE food crops until they can be proven "safe beyond reasonable doubt". This includes strengthening the national GE labelling laws of all GE products - including vegetable oils, starches, sugars, processing aids and additives, colourings and animal feed.**

**We ask you all to show leadership by keeping Australia GE-free. You owe this to the majority of Australian farmers, food businesses and consumers who want to stay GE-free.**

For more information visit:

<http://www.truefood.org.au>

<http://www.non-gm-farmers.com>

<http://www.gefreeaustralia.org>

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