

## **Submission to the Statutory Review of the Gene Technology Act 2000**

AgForce is the peak representative body for rural broad acre producers in the cattle, grain and sheep and wool sectors of Queensland. AgForce has established a vast regional and rural network in Queensland and represents a comprehensive geographical coverage of the Queensland rural industry.

Through the combined strength of our members, AgForce Grains is an extremely effective lobby group for Queensland rural producers and we continue to work closely with government, industry and the community to ensure the viewpoints and concerns of farmers are professionally represented at the highest level.

### **NATIONAL SCHEME**

Australia is a land of extremes and this has been highlighted in the very recent past. Research and development advances have been one of the ways in which farmers have managed to remain viable. Our members are fortunate to farm in Queensland and as a result do not have State GM restrictions placed on them. However as the two largest grain growing states do, the interest from corporate's and even government, in investing in gene technology is limited to say the least.

The inconsistencies in legislation across the grain growing states is extremely prohibitive in attracting funding for research and development into traits specific to Australia and each unique region.

AgForce supports a national scheme approach so there is consistent regulation surrounding gene technology. We would like to see the moratorium's that are currently in place and those states come under the Commonwealth's legislation. We anticipate this would allow organisations such as universities and rural development corporations (RDC'S) to attract funding, both public and private.

GM Canola and cotton have been grown successfully in Australia without any known problems. Exceptions under some individual states legislation have allowed this to occur.

### **EMERGING TRENDS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

Traditionally Australian farmers have been amongst the best in the world. This has been achieved for a number of reasons, however research and technology has been an important (if not the most important) factor.

The amount of gene technology research in Australia to date has been limited; North America (Canada and the United States) has lead the way in this area. It has been stated that there is a variety of corn being plated this year in the United States that has eight traits.

Australian farmer are currently growing varieties of canola that were released for commercial use in Canada 10 – 15 years ago. Without gene technology being conducted in Australia for our conditions it is difficult to see how many of our farmers will remain viable, as they will simply not be able to compete.

The statistics are already showing that the amount of arable land is decreasing and as a result the reaming land will have to feed an ever growing world population. With these trends, it is very difficult to see another way of achieving greater output without the assistance of gene technology.

Having said this AgForce supports the comprehensive and rigorous science based assessment of genetically modified species and product. Any GM development must pass the necessary scientific test regulated by the office of Gene Technology Regulator. Before release into the environment, industry must understand the capabilities and uses for any new developments.

#### **DEFINITIONS AND PROVISIONS WITHIN THE ACT**

AgForce supports the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator in ensuring that responsibility of research trials and commercial releases be strictly contained within the legislated guidelines. AgForce also believes that any regulation imposed should based on rigorous science and not on popular view. Also any legislation should allow the development of gene technology to be a viable and profitable industry, and if investment was received via an RDC it should receive the same support from government enjoyed by any other form of research.