

Media Release



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South Australian decision on GM crops motivated by politics

AusBiotech has described the announcement today by South Australian Premier Mike Rann and Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Rory McEwen to deny farmers access to GM crops as a political decision rather than a scientific one.

“The currently available information shows this decision was contradictory to advice given by the GM Crops Advisory Committee and the majority of farmer submissions which recommended the lifting of the restrictions,” Dr Anna Lavelle, CEO of AusBiotech, said.

“Victoria has already clearly demonstrated its commitment to biotechnology by agreeing to lift the moratorium following an independent review process and advice. New South Wales has also begun the process of allowing its farmers access to GM crops.

“GM crops are thoroughly regulated and assessed at the Federal level for both human and environmental health and safety and for use as food. Marketing considerations for GM crops should be left to the industry and not regulated at the State level.

“For the past 10 years both Australian cotton farmers and the environment has benefited from GM cotton, which has reduced insecticide use by up to 75%,” Dr Lavelle said.

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Dr Ian Edwards, Chairman of the AgBio Advisory Group said: "It is very disappointing to see South Australia making a decision that is not based on market realities. They have instead pandered to fringe groups and have rendered a great disservice to the farmers of South Australia."

Claims of significant premiums for GM-free canola are not borne out by a comparison of Australian and Canadian market statistics.

"Australian cotton farmers and more importantly Canadian canola farmers have been using GM crops since 1996. Despite their requests, South Australian farmers have been denied this choice," Dr Lavelle said.

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