

Submission to the Review of Tasmania's GMO Moratorium

Author: Brian Hartnett B.Sc. Hon.L.L.D.(UTAS)

Background: General Management of Pharmaceutical Production including Poppy Industry

Location: Launceston Tasmania

Status: Retired

Impact on Long Term Research and Development

Research and Development is a long term activity requiring significant investment and long term objectives over decades. It cannot be seen as a short term activity able to be turned on or off at will. Under the current Moratorium there is no incentive to invest for the long term. The impact will be felt in the future when Tasmanian industry will be at a competitive disadvantage and relatively low productivity.

Impact on Poppy Industry

In effect there is no exemption for the poppy industry or other medicinal crops as raw material for processing. The conditions attached to the Moratorium are so onerous even for a small field trial crop that they completely block any commercial project.

This industry is the world leader and must be given the opportunity to be competitive in the future. No investment in GMO will be made under the Moratorium. At some stage there will be competitors elsewhere in the world who introduce GMO crops and thereby close down the industry in Tasmania. The loss of income and employment would be catastrophic for the State.

Poppy is not attractive to bees and does not rely on them for pollination. There is no issue for honey production.

Poppy is well contained in the State after many decades of the industry with no significant chance of a GMO crop spreading further than the paddock.

A real exemption must be provided for medicinal crops if the Moratorium is renewed.

Continued use of chemicals for weed control

Nobody in agriculture wants to use chemical sprays for weed control but their use is essential for economic production of crops. A GMO plant which is resistant to a relatively safe herbicide would obviate the need for the wide range of chemicals currently used. There are health benefits and cost savings for everyone in the industry.

CSIRO developed a herbicide resistant poppy but it had to be abandoned due to the Moratorium.

State-wide Moratorium not appropriate

The state wide Moratorium makes life easy for some producers who wish to claim GMO free status. They just have to say they are in Tasmania. Their advantage becomes a disadvantage for other producers who may wish to apply GMO technology.

The producers who wish to be GMO free can do so on their property and in cooperation with other likeminded businesses. They can go through the certification for their property.

Producers who wish to use GMO technology would be able to do so under the control of the national office of the gene regulator.

Marketing Advantage

The claimed marketing advantage of GMO crops is small and restricted to a few businesses. They are holding back investment and advances in all other cropping industries. This bias should not be allowed to continue. Farms or areas which wish to be GMO free can do so in segregation from GMO areas. This has been shown to work well in other jurisdictions.

Victoria allows GMO to be used and they have no problem promoting themselves as a source for wholesome food in local and overseas markets.

Remove the Moratorium

The moratorium should not be extended any further and needs to be ended.

Tasmania should harmonise with nationwide regulations agreed by the Gene Regulator and other States. We do not need another set of burdensome regulations and restrictions.

Brian Hartnett

14 April 2019