

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE SA 5005  
AUSTRALIA  
TELEPHONE +61 8 8303 5174  
FACSIMILE +61 8 8303 4838

for: Tuesday, July 16, 2002

## **SCIENTISTS ISSUE STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON GM CROPS**

Adelaide scientists are angry at the proposed introduction of two Bills to South Australian Parliament that would impact on the research and commercialisation of genetically modified (GM) crops.

The scientists say some MPs supporting the Bills have ignored offers of more information about GM crops.

The group of scientists includes Australian and world leaders in their fields, from the University of Adelaide, the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Australian Weed Management and the CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding.

They say a Canadian farmer, Mr Percy Schmeiser, brought to Australia to promote the anti-GM line, has made misleading and false claims about GM crops, and that some South Australian politicians continued to support Mr Schmeiser despite his claims being discredited by the Federal Court of Canada.

South Australian Democrats MLC Mr Ian Gilfillan is expected to introduce a Bill to State Parliament today (Tuesday, July 16) for a five-year moratorium on GM crops. It is believed that No Pokies MLC Mr Nick Xenophon will also introduce a related bill.

Despite world-leading expertise on the potential environmental impacts of GM crops and canola in particular (including publication of the world's largest study of pollen flow in canola in last month's issue of the journal *Science*), Adelaide scientists say they have been ignored by State Parliament.

"We believe that public policy should be made on the basis of facts and not scare campaigns, such as the campaigns supported by Ian Gilfillan and others," says Dr Rick Roush, CEO of the Adelaide-based CRC for Australian Weed Management.

Dr Roush says he sent Mr Gilfillan an email on July 1 that raised serious concerns about Mr Schmeiser's credibility. Mr Schmeiser was due to appear at a public meeting on the GM issue supported by Mr Gilfillan.

Despite scientific facts showing that pollen flow and hybridisation is extremely low, and despite the court's ruling, Mr Schmeiser had continued to receive support from Mr Gilfillan and organisations such as Greenpeace and GeneEthics, Dr Roush says.

The Canadian court's decision in the Schmeiser case can be found here:  
<http://decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca/fct/2001/2001fct256.html>

A statement on this issue will be delivered to State Parliament (see following page) by University of Adelaide and CRC scientists today (Tuesday, July 16).

---

### ***MEDIA CONTACT:***

Dr Rick Roush: (08) 8303 6590 work, 0416 107 763 mobile, (08) 8339 6324 home

Professor Peter Langridge: 0438 831 312 mobile

## State MPs need the facts on GM

### STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT

As Australian scientists and public servants, we are concerned that State Parliament and the public may have been misled about GM crops by Canadian visitor Percy Schmeiser and friends.

Ian Gillfillan introduced Mr Percy Schmeiser to Parliament last week as part of his push for a moratorium on GM crops. Mr Schmeiser, a canola farmer from Canada, was presented as victim of a multinational company, Monsanto.

However, the Canadian court that heard the case decided Mr Schmeiser had deliberately collected and multiplied GM canola. He was caught, but is now posing as a victim.

Scientists at the University of Adelaide warned Mr Gillfillan that Mr Schmeiser was not all he claimed and provided information to show the full story. However, Mr Gillfillan is trying to push through legislation to block GM crops. We believe the legislation is ill-conceived and potentially damaging to South Australia's future economy.

Adelaide has built a strong international reputation in agricultural science and biotechnology. South Australian farmers are some of the world's most technically efficient in their use of natural resources. They farm without subsidies, but survive in world markets by their rapid uptake of proven innovative new technology. But some of our local politicians prefer to take their advice from questionable overseas lobbyists without even bothering to check their credibility.

Ironically, world-leading research to investigate possible environmental and commercial risks of GM canola has been conducted in Adelaide, with the world's largest and most detailed study of pollen flow in canola published recently after very careful peer evaluation in the prestigious international journal *Science*. This showed that pollen flow is well below internationally accepted standards.

The damage that a moratorium would bring to SA comes from three key directions.

First, it creates the expectation in farmers that there is a large GM-free market, but surveys and analyses that have been conducted in Australia and overseas show this is simply untrue. We would risk sending producers off chasing illusory market benefits while precluding them from reaping the gains from an emerging technology.

Second, GM technology offers some major advantages over current technology and these have been well studied and documented.

Third, the application of any technology is a slow and meticulous process. New varieties need to go through extensive field testing and analysis. If we turn our backs on a valuable technology now, precluding its evaluation for five years, we cannot expect to introduce it rapidly later when the misinformation from the recent tour campaign has died down.

Professor Peter Langridge, Plant Science, University of Adelaide and CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding  
Associate Professor Rick Roush, CEO, Weeds CRC

Professor Alan Kerr, AO, FAA, FRS, Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, USA

Professor Geoff Fincher, Plant Science, University of Adelaide

Dr Chris Preston, Applied and Molecular Ecology (Weed Science), University of Adelaide

Dr John C Radcliffe

Dr Amanda J Able, Plant Science, University of Adelaide

Dr. Wolfgang Knogge, Plant Science, University of Adelaide

Dr Max Tate (independent scientist)

Dr Ian T Riley, Applied and Molecular Ecology, University of Adelaide