

Misleading comments

Yet again Julie Newman puts together throw-away comments that are just not true and have no credibility. It is sad that she seems either not capable of, or willing to, learn from the world's best in plant breeding and agronomy. Julie for four years I have been asking you to visit typical farmers in Canada, USA, South America and Spain to test you GM assertions. Sadly, this request is to no avail and yet you still speak with such "authority".

I am currently in South America, learning of farmers views of GM technology in Brasil and Argentina. Yet again Julie could not be further from the truth on GM crops in her defence of the Minister Chance and Premier Carpenter on 21st August in the Farm Weekly (and Chance and Carpenter know this also).

Argentinian farmers do not pay a GRDC type levy of 44.1% as Julie asserts, and they never have done and most likely never will. All Argentinian farmers who grow soy pay a large "export only" tax of 35% on soy, it has nothing to do with the crop being GM, or non-GM, nor Monsanto. So it is neither 44.1% tax nor has it anything to do with Monsanto as Julie asserts.

I attended and spoke at the AAPRESID no-till farmer meeting in Rosario where 2,000 farmers attended. I gained a strong understanding of the economic issues these farmers face. I spoke at length to many leading farmers and scientists and GM soy has been an outstanding success. The week earlier there was a 300,000 strong protest rally against the governments ridiculous and crippling export soy levy, at this same town. Interestingly, the Argentine government is trying to ride on the coat tails of the profitability of GM soy in which is 99% adopted.

A group of 20 farmers travelling with me also witnessed the amazing adoption of GM soy in Brasil. It ranged from 60-90% adoption which is quite remarkable and the adoption continues to grow as GM soy varieties improve and more farmers learn how valuable the technology is, which is despite a royalty system. Are these farmers silly and also blinded by the multinationals?

The sad thing about South American GM crops is that both Minister Chance and Premier Carpenter know how profitable GM soy has been for Brasil and Argentina – just Google "Chance, Hansard, South America, GM crops" and see. Farmers worldwide who use GM technology, love the technology. People need to be careful when hearing selective trial interpretation of yield results that are misleading.

I do hope for Julie's sake that she is not suggesting that I have vested interests in the technology, other than as a farmer who wants the right to use the technology, as this would be false and could open her to being liable. I trust big companies no more than the next farmer. But I do know that for me, and my neighbours to remain farming profitably, in one of the driest regions of WA, that this technology would be a great asset. GMs are a much better way ahead for droughted farming communities than sandlewood or other trees as

the Minister might prefer – which could shut down rural communities.

Now for where the real issue is at: Premier Alan Carpenter you have behaved disgracefully! You know, that I have tried to meet with you on several occasions to discuss GM crops and their potential impact on drought affected local farmers. I have offered to visit you with some of WA's most prominent agricultural Professors to discuss your GM concerns only to be told by you that you trust Minister Chance and that I should talk to him! I have met with Minister Chance on numerous occasions, as you know, and his views are self motivated. I had hoped you were above that. I am disappointed in the political games that both you and Chance have played with WA farmers.

If you were genuine in your GM concerns you would ban all the GM products coming into WA, including pork from Canada that are fed GM meal – which is crippling our WA pork farmers. You should also work towards banning the importation of 500,000 t/year of GM soy that is fed to most of the livestock that we all eat in Australia. This is the strategy most consistent with your "fears" if you were genuinely concerned about the long-term effects of GM crops. Currently what you are doing is putting your farmers at a competitive disadvantage for all the wrong reasons.

Sincerely and from South America, Bill Crabtree, independent consultant and Morawa farmer