

MEDIA RELEASE

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Solution still needed for GMO coexistence in WA

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"Despite the findings of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs which found that existing common law compensation mechanisms were adequate to compensate non-GM farmers, we believe a solution to coexistence with GMO farming systems still needs to be found for Western Australia," said Glenn Schaube, Chair of the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA).

The report found that economic loss to farmers caused by contamination by genetically modified material is neither widespread nor a systemic problem in Western Australia.

"Unfortunately, for farmers using organic management practices, the risk of contamination from GMO crops drifting on their properties is very real," Mr Schaube said.

"Certified organics is a highly sensitive health conscious sector of the global food supply industry. It is driven by market demand—and the market demands zero content of GMOs in their food."

Organics is growing at around 15% per year and worth an estimated AUS\$2 billion globally. For Western Australian growers it offers significant opportunities to diversify their product into new markets.

"Without a solution, the local certified organic oil seed and cropping sector is still at risk of becoming the sacrificial lamb on the altar of genetically modified crops. A solution to co-existence that protects the interests of non-GM growers needs to be found," Mr Schaube said.

"Naturally we are disappointed in the Standing Committee's findings but we hope that the Western Australian Government can see the opportunities that organics offers local growers and will not close the door on the issue of coexistence."

NASAA recommended the Committee consider establishing a publically managed 'no fault' fund under the auspices of the state agricultural department but guided by an industry advisory group in addition to investment in a dedicated education/awareness campaign and looking at broader 'right to farm' legislation.

"We believe organic farming, conventional farming and GMO farming can successfully co-exist, recognising the rights of each farmer to choose how they grow and produce their products," Mr Schaube said.

"The last thing we want to see is an 'us and 'them' mentality which will only polarise farmers and communities. That would not benefit anyone," he said.

"We need to ensure the best possible risk strategies are place to support and protect everyone's agri-business interests."

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, AUSTRALIA

Formed in 1986, the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia supports the development and growth of organic food production in Australia and overseas. NASAA's Standard are recognised internationally across the organic supply chain covers – from input manufacturers to producers, processors to wholesale and retail operations - ensuring organic integrity from paddock to plate'.

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