

QUESTION

Date Wednesday, 9 May 2007
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Questioner Georganas, Steve, MP
 (Hindmarsh, ALP, Opposition)

Database House Hansard
Proof No
Responder McGauran, Peter, MP
 (Gippsland, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, NATS)

Source House
Type Question

Speaker
In Main Committee No

Mr Georganas (Hindmarsh) asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on 14 February 2007:

- (1) Is he aware of any crops with a drought tolerant characteristic inserted by genetic engineering that are presently available for commercial planting.
- (2) Is he aware of any crops with a drought tolerant characteristic inserted by genetic engineering that are under development.
- (3) Does the Government have plans to override any of the various State moratoria that currently prohibit the planting of genetically modified (GM) crops in those jurisdictions.
- (4) What procedures are used by the relevant authorities to test food imported into Australia for GM contamination.

Mr McGauran (Gippsland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Although research is being conducted into the genetic modification of broadacre crops to improve their adaptation to drought, I am not aware of any genetically modified (GM) crops with specific drought tolerance properties being grown commercially anywhere in the world. However, conservation of soil water may be an indirect benefit when using herbicide tolerant GM crops in reduced or zero tillage cultivation systems.
- (2) In Australia and around the world, the public and private sectors are working at developing drought resistant crops which could be available to Australian farmers in the future. These include varieties of wheat, cotton, corn (maize), rice, soybeans and canola.
- (3) No.
- (4) Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) sets food standards for food available for sale in Australia and New Zealand

(including imported food). AQIS inspects and samples foods at the border according to risk, based on advice from FSANZ. To date FSANZ has not identified any GM food that require action by AQIS. State and territory authorities inspect and sample domestic and imported food at point of retail sale to ensure they comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.