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Chown uses maiden speech to back benefits of GM crops

By COLIN BETTLES

GENETICALLY Modified (GM) crops can impart significant environmental advantages according to Agricultural Region MLC and former Dalwallinu grain grower Jim Chown.

Mr Chown used his maiden speech in the Upper House of State Parliament last week to shower praise on GM's and point out their economic and environmental benefits.

Mr Chown is a staunch rural Liberal, who has been heavily involved behind closed doors in the party's rural policy activities.

He said GM's were "the next step" in food production for an ever-expanding population.

Mr Chown said in the last decade, higher margins, through lower costs and increased yields, had seen Canadian canola plantings expand to 80pc of the area planted in western Canada.

He said the increase had also led to solid growth in associated industries such as a 60pc expansion in Canadian canola oil crushings.

"The Canola Council of Canada reports that the amount of chemicals applied to Canadian

GM canola crops annually has been reduced by 6000 tonnes," he said.

"Also less field operations have been required in the growing of GM Canola.

"Consequently, there has been a saving in the use of diesel by 31 million litres per annum, which equates to a saving of 13 million dollars for Canadian growers, based on 2001 figures.

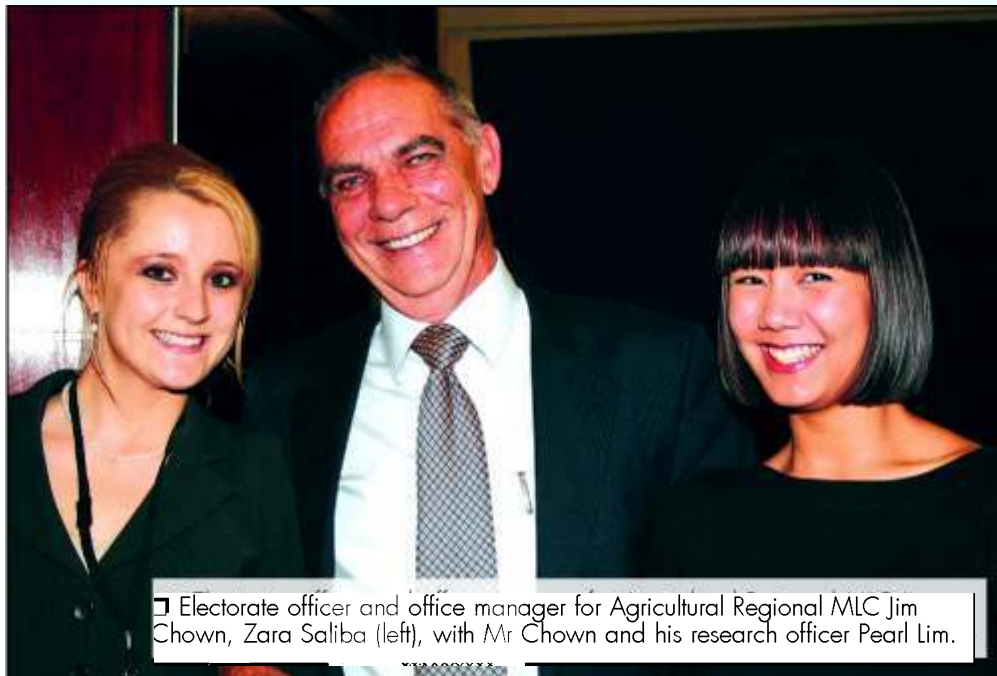
"GM foods are the most scrutinised, analysed and peer group tested food source in human history.

"In fact, tens of millions of GM meals have been eaten by millions of people over the last decade.

"There have been no documented cases regarding any adverse effects from GM-derived food consumption.

"I look forward to seeing the data from this year's trials in WA."

Mr Chown said GM's needed to be explored in a managed way to assess the benefits of GM canola.



□ Electorate officer and office manager for Agricultural Regional MLC Jim Chown, Zara Saliba (left), with Mr Chown and his research officer Pearl Lim.