

press clip

First GM canola delivered in WA

By COLIN BETTLES

THE Metro Grains Centre received WA's first ever delivery of Genetically Modified (GM) canola on Monday, in what may be the first of many more to follow.

The canola was harvested from the seven hectare trial site being run by the Agriculture and Food Department east of Geraldton, and is believed to have yielded 1.5 tonnes per hectare.

A large contingent of media attended the delivery ceremony, along with Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman.

The canola is being grown as part of a historic series of large scale commercial trials being run by the Department, in conjunction with 17 WA growers, under an exemption to the GM Crops Free Areas Act 2003, which is currently under review.

Mr Redman said more GM canola would be delivered to the Metro Grains Centre and the CBH Mt Kokeby grain delivery site during this harvest from the Department's trial sites and the commercially driven trials of the participating growers.

Meckering grower John Snooke is expected to be the first WA grower to deliver a load of GM canola to CBH.

As part of the legislative review, the Department will prepare an independent report for Mr Redman over the next two months, analysing the crop's agronomic performance and the different aspects of its segregation capacity.

Based on that report and discussion with a range of stakeholders, he will make a decision on what to recommend to Cabinet, in regards to the technology's future.

A decision is expected to be made some time in late January, 2010.

Mr Redman said GM canola had been grown for about 12-14 years internation-

ally, and was well accepted in the US, and Canada in particular.

"It's a technology that a number of different countries are looking at," he said.

"I think it's appropriate that WA has a look at this.

"They have allowed it to be grown in Victoria and NSW and my recent visit to those areas, and to Cootamundra in particular, has highlighted that they see it fitting very well into their farming systems.

"I must highlight it is not a silver bullet.

"It is not something that everyone is going to grow or put their whole farm into, but it becomes another tool in the tool box that farmers can use to address the challenges that they face in agriculture in WA.

"What we are looking at next year is the potential of whether or not if we should extend the trial or whether we should allow farmers to grow GM canola in WA on the basis of the minister giving an exemption order."

Mr Redman said in the review he would not only focus on the capacity to segregate GM canola, but also ensure non-GM canola growers could also be accommodated for in future.

"I'm expecting that it may well be a Cabinet decision, but again I will be making a recommendation to the Cabinet," he said.

"There's a number of options and it may well be that we choose not to grow GM's for another year, or we may ban the whole thing altogether.

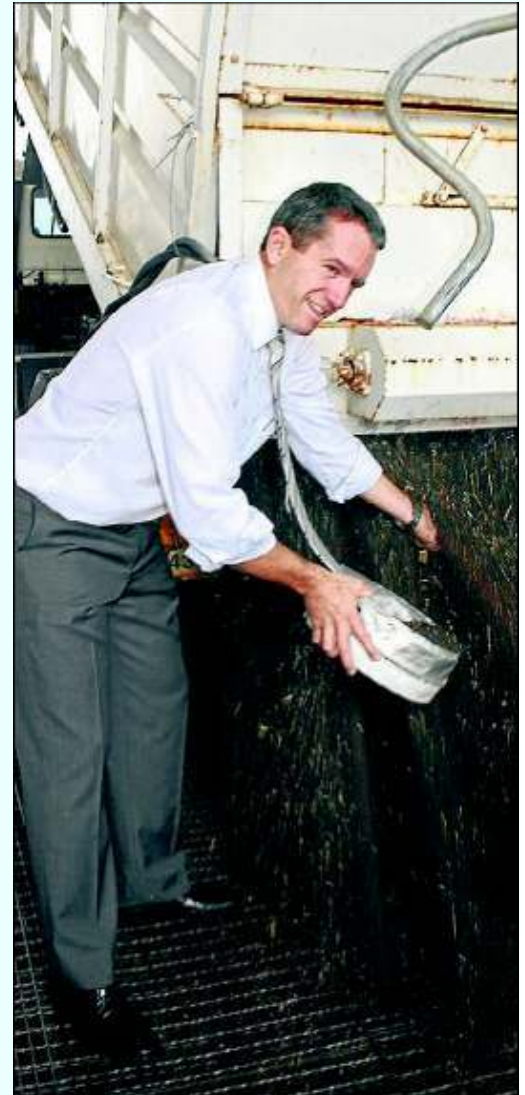
"I think there are three possible choices.

"One is not to do it again.

"One is to extend the trial and one is to open it up for GM canola in WA.

"I'm not going to be premature.

"I'm waiting for the information to come to me and once that information comes to me we will make a judgement."



□ Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman with a sample of the GM canola delivered to the CBH Metro Grains Centre on Monday.