



press clip

Market for GM canola does exist: VFF

By COLIN BETTLES

RECENT comments about Genetically Modified (GM) canola crops made by Shadow Agriculture Minister Mick Murray have been labelled as incorrect by the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF).

Last week, Mr Murray issued a media statement saying Victorian farmers who were growing GM canola this year had failed to find buyers for their crops.

He said grain markets were at risk because of it and WA farmers could also find themselves in the same position soon, if the GM ban was lifted here.

His argument was based on the premise that Victorian canola farmers, who had their moratorium on commercial GM canola production lifted in November 2007, were told that there was no market for their GM crop at a recent series of Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) grain marketing meetings.

"If the GM canola crop is deemed suitable for WA conditions and farmers begin to grow it, they may face the same rebuff from grain buyers," Mr Murray said.

"GM canola growers in WA could face the prospect that lucrative markets in Europe will refuse to take their grain, if the Barnett Government continues on its current approach."

However, VFF public affairs manager Brendan Roswell, VFF Grains Group manager Tanya Pittard, and VFF Grains Group deputy chairman Andrew Weidemann scotched the Minister's claims about the information provided at the VFF grain marketing forums.

Mrs Pittard said Mr Murray's comments were completely incorrect.

"Whilst a couple of marketers said that at this stage they were not buying GM canola, they also indicated they would be buying canola based on customer requirements so could be buying later in the season," she said.

"Many of the other marketers will be buying canola regardless of GM or non GM status and some marketers such as GrainCorp were specifically offering prices for GM canola separate to non-GM, so they are definitely buying GM.

"The VFF Grain Marketing Roadshow never claimed to have all the grain buyers in attendance.

"However we had a very good cross section of the companies operating in the Victorian grain market.

"At no stage were farmers in attendance told there was no market for GM canola.

"It is a shame Mr Murray did

not attend any of the 11 events in person as he may then have had an accurate picture of what was actually said."

Mr Weidemann said the Minister's comments were not true.

He said it was also a "non-issue" because he could sell any of the grain from the 250 hectare GM canola crop he is growing this season - "today if I wanted to".

"There's still plenty of buyers for GM canola here in Victoria," he said.

"There's just not a lot of it being grown yet, which means there's not a lot of capacity being built for buying and crushing it etcetera."

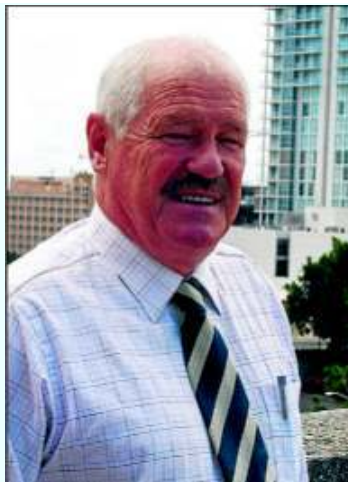
Mr Murray said one of his staff had brought the issue to his attention and at the time, he advised them to be 100 per cent accurate with their research.

He said he was disappointed, because he was not the type of politician to tell half truths or mislead people.

"It has been pointed out to me that there have been some doubts about the buying of GM canola in Victoria and in some areas there has been some confusion if GM can be bought or sold," Mr Murray said.

"And until the market settles down there will be some doubts about the markets for WA.

"On the east coast, they should not be rushing into anything until the marketers have developed a satisfactory approach."



□ Shadow Agriculture Minister Mick Murray.