



CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

GMO situation in Australia

Background

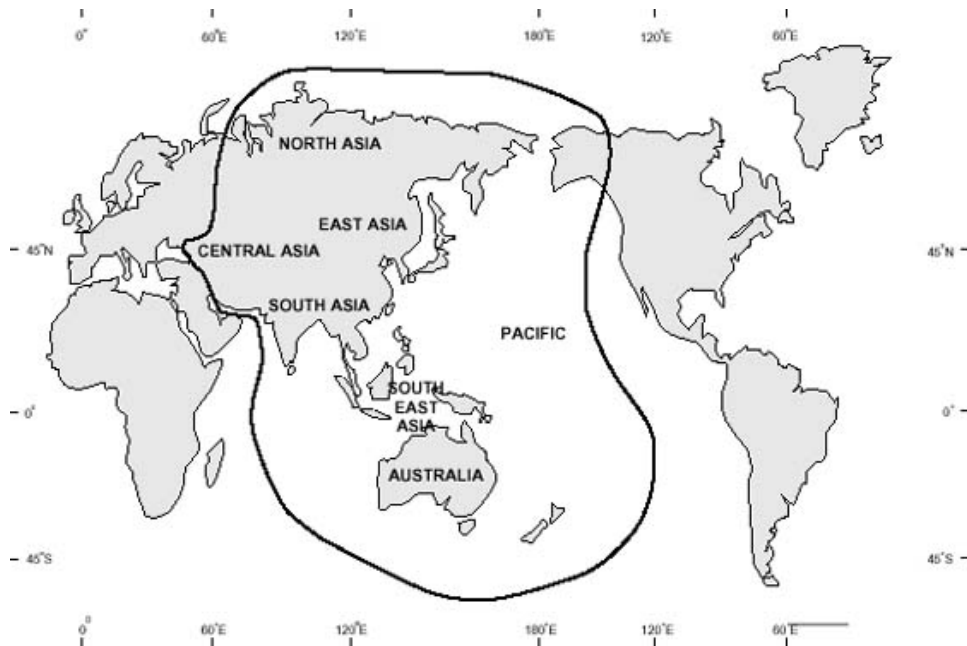


Figure 1: Map of Australia and location - <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/2001-2005/images/map1.jpg>

Regulatory organisations in charge of GM crops and foods are:

Office of Gene Technology Regulators' (OGTR) role

- In charge of approving GM crops for trials and commercial release in Australia
- Crops grown are subject to respective state bans or moratorium.
- Does not conduct any environmental testing

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)

- Food standards set for Australia and New Zealand under an integrated food regulatory system involving both the governments.
- FSANZ does not conduct independent testing of GM ingredients
- No requirement of mandatory labelling of GM ingredients.

Both regulatory bodies have failed in their roles to assessing GM crops and foods into Australia.

Current situation



Figure 2: Australian states

<http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/choose-australia/regional-life/images/maps/mapofaustralia.gif>

Australia is currently a divided country for commercial growing of GM crops:

- Victoria – moratorium ended Feb 2008. Planting of GM canola has started.
- New South Wales – as above
- South Australia – recently announced that moratorium extended indefinitely
- Western Australia – ends at next state government election (possibly end this year).
- Northern Territory – no moratorium
- Queensland – no moratorium

Implications

Implications for trade – will GM states lose market share? Will other states obtain premium prices?

Implications for border control e.g. SA and Victoria. State governments have yet to work out liability regimes as to who wears the cost of contamination, buffer zones etc.

Implications for organic sector – Australian Certified Organic standards is Australia-wide certification, but organic sectors in those states growing GM canola cannot be 100% certain that their produce has no-GM contamination. Labelling GM free or non-GM under Australian Organic Standards at present means zero tolerance.

Food production - how will this affect food produced in GM states? Current labelling laws do not cover GM ingredients, so will all food produced in GM states become 'unknown'?

Impacts on biodiversity & environment overall unaddressed

What we are doing in our campaigns

Western Australia currently has a moratorium or ban that ends at the next State government election, which is possibly end of this year or early next year.

Say NO to GMO campaign is asking for:

- a 10-year extension to the moratorium
- Strict liability to be addressed i.e. those introducing the technology (companies and farmers) should be made legally responsible for any contamination or health issues
- Stricter labelling of GM ingredients in food produce.

Australia needs your help!

I am hoping that the participants of the Planet Diversity conference will endorse two letters. One is to our Prime Minister asking him to:

- a) disband the regulatory bodies in charge of introducing GMOs into the country,
- b) review all its procedures, and
- c) to keep Australia GM free

and, the other is a letter to the Western Australian State Premier asking for an extension to the State's ban on commercial growing of GM crops.

Dr Maggie Lilith
Sustainable Agriculture Officer
Conservation Council of WA (*Say NO to GMO campaign*)
Email: srlo@conservationwa.asn.au