



YARRA RANGES NOTES

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THE CASE AGAINST GMOs IN THE SHIRE OF YARRA RANGES

The Shire of Yarra Ranges is opposing a decision by the Gene Technology Regulator to allow the trial of a genetically modified blue rose to take place in the Yarra Ranges.

The decision to allow Florigene Limited to grow a genetically modified rose is in spite of strong opposition from the council, which in February 2001 adopted a policy opposing the introduction of GMO crops into the shire.

The Gene Technology Regulator disregarded the council's written submission against the trial and its official policy opposing GMOs. The council's policy was developed following widespread community concerns about the growing of GMO crops in the Yarra Ranges.

Yarra Ranges' agricultural produce is regarded as some of the finest in the world. The trialling of a new genetically modified rose poses a significant threat to the region's agricultural and horticultural producers, our precious biodiversity and clean and green reputation.

Horticultural production in the shire is worth an estimated \$710 million per annum with the nursery and cut flower sectors worth about \$390 million and the orchard and berry fruit industries about \$110 million (source Centre for eBusiness and Communications Swinburne University).

The council's objection to GMOs is not just based on philosophical concerns; we have major concerns on scientific grounds and the potential impact on our farmers and horticultural industries.

Not enough is known about the potential effects of a genetically modified rose on insect life including native and exotic pollinating insects, its potential for recombinant viruses and the level of gene flow with other rose cultivars and potential weediness from altered genes.

It is the council's belief that these issues have not been adequately addressed by the Gene Technology Regulator and as a result the council is calling for its decision to be reversed.

Australia's environment is littered with the introduction of new species that have gone wrong from rabbits and foxes to failed biological controls such as the cane toad. The Yarra Ranges' environment and its agricultural sector are too precious to risk with a trial of this nature.

Community Links

Lilydale

Anderson Street
Telephone
1300 368 333

Healesville

276 Maroondah Highway
Telephone
5965 3501

Monbulk

94 Main Road
Telephone
9756 7677

Upwey

40 Main Street
Telephone
9752 6054

Yarra Junction

cnr Warburton Hwy
& Hoddle St
Telephone
5967 2875

WHAT WE ARE DOING

The council will write to the Gene Technology Regulator, Dr Sue Meeks, requesting that she reverse her decision. Letters will also be sent to the federal Minister for Health and Ageing and to local state and federal MP's outlining the council's opposition to genetically modified crops in the Yarra Ranges.

The council will continue to advocate with other levels of government and stakeholders to establish the shire as a GE free zone and is calling for the mandatory labelling on all products produced using gene technology.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you are opposed to the trial of a genetically modified blue rose in the Shire of Yarra Ranges you can write to the Gene Technology Regulator, Dr Sue Meeks care of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator, PO Box 100 Woden, ACT 2606, and to your local federal and state Members of Parliament expressing your concerns about the trialling of GMO crops in the Yarra Ranges.

Contact details for Federal Members of Parliament:

Minister for Health and Ageing Tony Abbott GPO Box 9848 Canberra ACT 2601
Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov.au

The Hon Fran Bailey 237 Maroondah Highway Healesville 3777 Fran.Bailey.MP@aph.gov.au

Tony Smith Suite 1, 16-18 Croydon Road Croydon 3136 Tony.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au

Jason Wood 83 Boronia Road Boronia 3155 Jason.Wood.MP@aph.gov.au

WHAT'S AT STAKE

- Some of the state's most significant biodiversity with important flora and fauna.
- A thriving agricultural sector renowned for its premium quality food and produce and a major employer of the region's people.

Yarra Ranges Agricultural Sector Statistics

The agricultural sector employs about 4000 people on a permanent basis with a further 6000 seasonal employees. It is a major generator of jobs and money in the local, state and national economies.

Nursery Sector

93 businesses generating a Gross Value of Production of \$290M per annum ("Farming Real Estate" Centre for eBusiness and Communications Swinburne University)

Cut Flower Sector

73 businesses generating GVP of \$100M per annum

Orchard Fruit Industry

50 businesses generating GVP of \$50M per annum (industry sources)

Berry Fruit Industry

93 businesses \$60M per annum (industry sources)

Wine Grapes

113 businesses generating approximately \$150 to \$200M per annum

Vegetable Growers

47 businesses \$10M per annum

Sources: *Centre for eBusiness and Communications Swinburne University 2000 and ABS Shire of Yarra Ranges Economic Development Profile 2005.*