

Hon David Basham MP

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development

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Farmers given choice to grow GM crops in 2021

Farmers across mainland South Australia will have the choice to grow Genetically Modified (GM) food crops in time for the 2021 grain season with no councils approved to operate as a GM-free area.

The GM moratorium was lifted for mainland South Australia in May this year but councils had a one-off six-month ability to apply to be designated a GM crop cultivation-free area, which 11 of the 68 Local Government Areas chose to do.

The independent GM Crop Advisory Committee assessed all 11 applications on the merits of demonstrating an economic benefit from remaining GM-free and provided advice to the State Government.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development David Basham said outside of Kangaroo Island, there was no substantial evidence to justify any council area remaining GM-free.

“The Marshall Liberal Government has undertaken an exhaustive consultation process on lifting the GM moratorium and the outcome today importantly gives farmers on mainland South Australia the same choice as those across the rest of mainland Australia,” said Minister Basham.

“By lifting the GM moratorium everywhere except Kangaroo Island, we are backing our farmers and researchers to grow the state’s agriculture sector and create jobs.

“Under the legislation councils had a once-off six-month opportunity to apply to remain GM free but under the Act passed by Parliament, applications could only be considered on trade and marketing grounds.

“The GM Crop Advisory Committee assessed the 11 applications and deemed there wasn’t sufficient evidence to recommend designation as an area where no GM food crops can be grown. The Committee said individual businesses can maintain non-GM markets as occurs in other mainland states.

“The lifting of the GM moratorium gives our grain growers the certainty they need ahead of the 2021 season. It also brings our farmers and researchers onto a level playing field with their counterparts around the country who have had access to GM technology for at least a decade.

“An independent review found so-called price premiums under a GM moratorium in South Australia were a myth and has cost our State’s grain growers at least \$33 million since 2004.”

The 11 councils who unsuccessfully applied to have local GM moratoriums were Adelaide Hills Council, Alexandrina Council, Barossa Council, Berri Barmera Council, City of Onkaparinga, City of Playford, District Council of Yankalilla, Mount Barker District Council, City of Tea Tree Gully, Town of Gawler and City of Victor Harbor.

Further information regarding GM in South Australia can be found at:

https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/primary_industry/genetically_modified_gm_crops