Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper Submission - IP283
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SUBMISSION to WHITE PAPER ON AGRICULTURE

In a land with the oldest soil in the world, extreme weather conditions, little topsoil, and limited water and arable land, we need to protect ourselves from a number of potentially deadly threats to our agriculture, our farmers and our food security.

THE GM THREAT

In all the years since GM technologies were introduced the only significant application that has eventuated is that it allowed farmers to use as much Glyphosate (Round-Up Ready) as they want. Monsanto's GM seeds supposedly meant that Round-Up Ready crops were immune to the pesticide but the weeds were not, were safe to use, would save farmers money, deliver higher yields and feed the world – none of which proved to be true.

Round Up Ready a danger to health.

In California, where there is a mandatory system of reporting pesticide poisoning, Round Up Ready (Glyphosate) is the third most common cause of pesticide illness in farm workers.

Two separate studies in Sweden have linked exposure to Glyphosate to Hairy Cell Leukemia and non-Hodgkins lymphoma. These types of cancers were extremely rare, however non-Hodgkins lymphoma is the most rapidly increasing cancer in the Western world. It has risen by 73% in the USA since 1973. Another study has found a higher incidence of Parkinson disease amongst farmers who used herbicides, including Glyphosate.
http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5229.cfm

The GM Economics Myth - USDA Report Exposes GM
http://www.nlpwessex.org/docs/usdagmeconomics.htm

1. "GE crops available for commercial use do not increase the yield potential of a variety." [p21]
2. "... the adoption of herbicide-tolerant soybeans does not have a statistically significant effect on net returns." [p23]
3. "...the soybean results appear to be inconsistent with the rapid adoption of this [GE] technology." [p23]

4. "An analysis using broader financial performance measures (including net farm income and return on assets) did not show GE crops to have a significant impact." [p23]
5. "Perhaps the biggest issue raised by these results is how to explain the rapid adoption of GE crops when farm financial impacts appear to be mixed or even negative." [p24]
6. "Even more puzzling, the adoption of herbicide-tolerant soybeans and Bt corn has been rapid, even though we could not find positive financial impacts in either the field-level nor the whole-farm analysis." [p24]
7. "..the adoption of Bt corn had a negative impact on the farm financial performance..." [p25]
8. "...the total herbicide pounds used on [GE] soybeans actually increased as glyphosate was substituted for conventional herbicides... the data indicate that an estimated 13.4 million pounds of glyphosate substituted for 11.1 million pounds of other synthetic herbicides." [p27]
9. "Change in pesticide use from the adoption of herbicide-tolerant cotton was not significant." [p28 - see note to graph]
10. "Availability, since the 1980s, of postemergent herbicides that could be applied over a crop during the growing season has facilitated the use of no-till ... Adoption of conservation tillage for soybeans grew (at a decreasing rate) from about 25 percent of the soybean acreage in 1990 to 48 percent in 1995, the 5-year period previous to the introduction of herbicide-tolerant soybeans. Growth of conservation tillage increased further in 1996, but then appears to have stagnated between 50 and 60 percent in the following years... According to the econometric model results, using 1997 ARMS survey data, farmers using no-till for soybeans were found to have a higher probability of adopting herbicide-tolerant seed, but using herbicide tolerant seed did not significantly affect no-till adoption. This result seems to suggest that farmers already using no-till found herbicide-tolerant seeds to be an effective weed control mechanism that could be easily incorporated into their weed management program."

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There has been no independent study ever done that supports the use of GM technology.
http://www.examiner.com/article/usda-report-genetically-engineered-crops-don-t-measure-up
Over the first 15 years of commercial use, GM seeds have not been shown to increase yield potentials of the varieties.

Reports such as the US National Centre for Food & Agricultural Policy (NCFAP) that claimed GM crops performed strongly economically was financed by Monsanto and the Biotechnology industry Organisation (BIO) that's remit since 1993 has included the responsibility for '*shaping political and public reaction to the genetically modified foods that were poised to enter supermarkets*.'

At the same time the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the US Department of Agriculture released its own extensive analysis that produced a totally different story.

THE AGENT ORANGE THREAT
GM crops have been designed to withstand the effects of Round UP Ready allowing it to be used extensively on GM crops. But even this has failed.

The proof - in the USA the FDA has just granted Dow Chemicals the license for a new product – 2, 4-D to counter the superweeds that have been created by the over-use of Glyphosates and are now Glyphosate resistant.

2,4-D is Agent Orange. Agent Orange is banned in Australia
http://sustainablepulse.com/2013/08/24/apvma-australia-bans-toxic-herbicide-24-d-products/#.Uzs5KShbPgQ

It was also banned in the USA – up until now. Not forgetting that Agent Orange was designed and used for the sole purpose of defoliating the Vietnamese countryside.

Glyphosate is extremely dangerous – 24-D is lethal.
http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/3/agent-orange-farmtotableherbicidemonsantodowchemicalagriculture.html

Summarising the GM threat :

1. It's dangerous – no testing, this is a human experiment without any controls
2. The big lie – GM stops the over-use of pesticides and therefore saves farmers money.
3. The Big truth - Round up Ready has already created super weeds that are immune to Glyphosates and now we are threatened with the use of Agent Orange.
4. GM is the cornerstone of big agriculture that is not the right way to go – small agriculture not big agriculture is the way of he future.
5. GM will feed the world. Another lie. GM reduces yield not increases it http://rodaleinstitute.org/tag/soil-health-2/
6. No till – you don't need GM for no till farming. Farmers already do this

THE GOVERNMENT THREAT TO OUR FOOD SECURITY

We have no food security and we probably won't ever have any if history is any indication. An example of how the dice is stacked and why Barnaby Joyce, the Nationals, Liberals and Labor will do nothing and why writing this is a waste of time, is FSANZ.

This is the Food Standards Australia & New Zealand. This body is supposed to be the gatekeeper of our food security. Yet it does little to no research and if you search a bit you will discover that for 40 submissions against the introduction of a particular food and one in favour the one wins – everytime.

Check to see how many independent tests were done on any of the approvals FSANZ has done. You'll not find one.

What FSANZ does is when a company like Monsanto or any large food company comes to them with a product like GM, FSANZ merely asks if tests have been done. If the company says yes then that food product is approved and goes straight onto the Australian market - no questions asked and certainly no independent testing required.

In other words FSANZ is merely the rubber stamp for the big food companies. So much for our food security.

CSG & COAL MINING THREAT

Both these industries are unsustainable. Both pollute our water and destroy our farmland. Both deliver profits to a handful of overseas companies with little to no return to Australia. Both gain most of their wealth from export not providing energy to Australia.

Both do not deliver on jobs - there are currently less than 1800 people employed in NSW coal-fired power stations and less than 4000 coal miners supplying their fuel as opposed to the renewable sector with a projected 73,800 jobs on offer. Both CSG & Coal mining produce products – gas & coal - that are fast being rejected on the global markets. In short these two industries damage our land, threaten our food supply and water and offer no sustainable, financial benefit to Australia.

THE THREAT OF BIG FARMING - IT DOESN'T WORK

In the meantime FAO has revealed that the way of the future is not big agriculture but small sustainable agriculture.
http://grist.org/industrial-agriculture/2011-06-14-fight-over-future-of-farming-un-fao-vs-big-ag/

The new agricultural paradigm, according to the FAO, should be "save and grow." Farmers must preserve the natural resources at their disposal in order to increase their productivity. Reduce tillage to save soil, crop rotations to save nutrients, and improved seeds to save water. So why does both the government only support big agriculture no matter what proof is in front of them - no money in it for the big end of town?

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SOLUTIONS

To secure our food we need to secure our soil, our land and our farmers.

We need to:

- Create a Ministry of Food with a Minister for Food
- Make the protection of agriculture land a priority.
- Ban the GM in Australia and commit to GM free
- Place a *'never to be used'* ban on Agent Orange
- Ban CSG and coal mining on our farmland and near our water supplies
- Support and encourage smaller, sustainable farms
- Reward organic farmers
- Support and encourage people to buy food made and grown in Australia
- Clearly label all food and highlight the name and location of the farm from which the product comes
- Demand FSANZ employs rigorous independent research and proof of safety before any food is allowed onto the Australian market
- Make FSANZ accountable and reportable to government for the decisions it makes
- Connect schools with farmers
- Introduce proper food studies into the school curriculum: the need to protect farmland; the importance of farming; growing and eating Australian and the value of chemical free products.