

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**19 June 2014**



### **NASAA supports appeal in GM contamination case**

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture (NASAA) hopes the outcomes from Steve Marsh's decision to appeal last month's Western Australian Supreme Court decision, will provide greater certainty for Australia's organic and non GM conventional sectors.

In May 2014 the court rejected WA organic farmer Steve Marsh's claim that his land was contaminated by Genetically Modified (GM) canola grown by his neighbor, conventional farmer Michael Baxter.

NASAA General Manager Ben Copeman said his organisation supported Mr Marsh's difficult decision to lodge an appeal.

"A lot of the commentary in the wake of last month's ruling has been misinformed and may be academic if the decision is overturned," he said.

"The original decision has the potential to affect the vast majority of Australia's conventional growers who choose not to grow GM as well certified organic farmers. On behalf of all organic producers and consumers, NASAA has drawn a line in the sand on the issue of GM in the organic food chain because our markets demand a zero tolerance of GM. In addition, both farmers and consumers have the right to choose what they grow and what they eat.

"We will continue to maintain a zero tolerance approach to GM in organic products until such time as producer and consumer sentiment changes.

"The message from our producers, from our export customers, and from the consumer is that they don't want GM in organic products at all.

"We also know that our biggest grain markets, do not want GM in their conventional food chains and have zero tolerance to GM contamination.

"NASAA was in Beijing last week meeting with our Chinese partners and it was made clear that changes to zero tolerance in organic systems would be viewed unfavourably by the Chinese Organic Regulators.

"Our position is to maintain the NASAA Certified Organic Standard as a guarantee that NASAA certified organic products are GM free. This will ensure continual access for our operators to domestic and international markets and provide assurance to consumers that they can buy NASAA Certified Organic products with confidence."

Mr Copeman said "it's now up to all sectors, the GM, non GM conventional and organic, to work together on protocols on how they can successfully co-exist.

"We've always maintained that everyone needs to respect each other's right to farm in the way they choose.

"We've also maintained that procedures and protocols need to be regularly reviewed to make sure that they remain relevant and to help prevent cases like Marsh vs Baxter happening in future."

The world organic market is estimated to be worth around \$60 billion, with the Australian market at about \$1.3 billion. Forecasts consistently project positive growth in both domestic and international markets.

In March 2014, NASAA signed a world-first agreement with a leading Chinese certification body Beijing WuYue HuaXia Management and Technique Centre (CHC) to streamline the process of organic certification for the export of Australian products to China.

The agreement is the only one of its kind in the world, allowing NASAA-trained, CHC-approved inspectors to certify Australian products to Chinese Organic Regulations for export to China.

"NASAA is getting on with business and we will continue to facilitate access to global organic markets for Australian organic products including the highly regulated Chinese organic market," Mr Copeman said.

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## **About NASAA:**

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA) was formed in 1986 and supports the education of industry and consumers on organic, biodynamic and sustainable agricultural practices.

NASAA was Australia's first organic certifier.

Today, its certification arm, NASAA Certified Organic (NCO), provides certification and inspection services to assist Certified Organic operators access every organic market in the World.

NCO certifies more than 1,000 operators in 13 countries, certifying some 5.5m ha of agricultural land worldwide.