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OILSEEDS NEWS

CONSUMERS WARM TO GM

Climate change, drought and fuels shortages have changed the way that people think about genetically modified (GM) crops, according to Tess McDonald, General Manager for Biotechnology Australia, speaking at the Australian Oilseeds Federation Forum in Sydney last week.

Ms McDonald presented some results from the latest survey on public attitudes to biotechnology - including attitudes to GM crops.

The survey of over 1,000 people from around Australia has been conducted every two years since 1999 by Biotechnology Australia and revealed that the general public now sees biotechnology as a solution rather than a problem.

“It’s a huge change,” said Ms McDonald.

Since 2005, there have been major increases in awareness and positive perceptions of GM food crops – with an increase in the acceptability of such crops from 48 per cent of people in 2005 to 73 per cent now.

However, Ms McDonald said that many members of the public still showed a lack of awareness of GM crops, both in rural and urban areas.

A startling 18 per cent of those surveyed thought that GM wheat was grown in their home state and around three to five per cent believed different GM fruit and vegetables were grown in their state. Yet the only GM crop grown commercially in Australia at present is cotton.

And 28 per cent of those surveyed believed GM canola was grown commercially in their state. No commercial crops of canola are currently grown in Australia due to state-based moratoria, although canola is grown in research trials across four states.

Ms McDonald said negativity about GM crops – particularly from young people - was more due to a lack of knowledge than direct opposition for GM.

To view Ms McDonald’s presentation, see

http://www.australianoilseeds.com/about_aof/aof_forum/presentations_by_year/aof_forum_2007 .

Attached file: Tess oct 07 2.jpg; Caption: “HUGE CHANGE: Tess McDonald at the AOF Forum last week said Australian consumers are now warming to GM crops.”
