

Growing GM canola in Australia?

There are many, varied opinions and concerns about the possible future farming of genetically modified canola in Australia.

In this activity you will explore a number of the concerns or opinions that people may have. You will look at these from the point of view of a number of different people. After your own investigation and discussion with others you should be able to be more confident of your own view.

You will need:

- access to the internet
- access to the information on canola from *Biotechnology online*.

What to do:

1. Divide the class into up to seven groups. You should have at least two students in each group. Each group should adopt one of the following roles. As many as possible of these roles should be adopted.
 - **A farmer** — concerned about the cost of seeds and labour for the farm and about obtaining a good income from the farm.
 - **A neighbour** — of a farmer (who uses aerial spraying of the farm crops as part of the farm weed control program) who is concerned about the effects of this spray on the property and the health of the family.
 - **An environmentalist** — concerned about any effects that the seeds of the farmer's crop may have on the environment.
 - **A supermarket manager** — concerned that the products on the shelves will be popular with his customers so that they will sell well.
 - **A cook** — concerned about the safety and quality of the oil from GM canola plants.
 - **A seed merchant** — concerned to obtain maximum sales of seeds and herbicides to customers.

Biotechnology Online School Resource

Increasing the public's general awareness of biotechnology and its uses, through the provision of balanced and factual information explaining the technology, its applications, and regulations to safeguard people and the environment.

For further information contact the Gene Technology Information Service on freecall **1800 631 276**.

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- **An import/export manager** — concerned that the seeds and the food products that the company sells overseas will compete successfully with those from USA and Europe.
2. Each group should then share the work of reading about arguments for and against the use of GM crops and the safety of GM food in the materials from the websites below.

Q & A from the Biotechnology Australia site at
http://www.biotechnology.gov.au/community_issues/qa/qa.asp

The science of gene technology: benefits and risks from the CSIRO genetechnology site at <http://genetechnology.csiro.au/debate2.htm>

Gene Technology: community views for and against from the CSIRO genetechnology site at <http://genetechnology.csiro.au/debate2.htm>

Environmental impact of GM crops (FAQs) from the CSIRO genetechnology site at <http://genetechnology.csiro.au/faqs.htm>

GM food safety questions and answers from the CSIRO genetechnology site at http://genetechnology.csiro.au/foodsafety_faqs.htm

What are the risks of GE food? from the Australian Conservation Foundation at http://www.acfonline.org.au/campaigns/genethics/briefings/food_table.htm

Environmental concerns about genetically engineered food crops from the Australian Conservation Foundation at <http://www.acfonline.org.au/campaigns/genethics/briefings/infosheet.htm>

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3. Decide which of these views or ideas are of concern to a person in the role adopted by the group.
4. Working in your group, and using this relevant information and any extra information you may wish to search for, develop an argument for or against farming genetically engineered canola crops in Australia in the future. Make sure that every member of the group is confident that they can explain the argument to students who are not members of the group.
5. Rearrange the class groupings so that each of the new groups has at least one student from each of the initial groups.
6. Present the arguments prepared by the initial groups to the members of the new group. Each speaker may need to answer question from others in the group in order to make their argument clear.
7. When all the arguments have been heard and discussed, work by yourself or with one other student to decide on your opinion about the planting of GM canola in Australia in the future.

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