

## TASMANIAN GENE TECHNOLOGY POLICY (2014-2019)

# BACKGROUND

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The import, use and development of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Tasmania, along with any other dealings, are regulated by numerous laws at both Commonwealth and State levels

Tasmania has since 2001 maintained a moratorium on the commercial release of GMOs to the Tasmanian environment.

The Tasmanian *Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act (2004)* (“the Act”) provides the basis for the moratorium and regulates dealings with GMOs for ‘marketing purposes’.

In 2013, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) undertook a comprehensive public review of the moratorium on GMOs in the State.

The Act, and hence the moratorium, expires on 16 November 2014.

# A FIVE-YEAR MORATORIUM

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Agrivision 2050 is the Government’s plan to capitalise on Tasmania’s competitive strengths and create jobs by growing the value of the agricultural sector in Tasmania to \$10 billion per year by 2050.

Tasmania’s GMO free status currently supports food producers to leverage the State’s competitive strengths in agriculture, that is, rich soil, favorable climate, abundant water, biosecurity, innovative businesses and premium brand.

The Tasmanian Government will maintain a moratorium on the commercial release of GMOs into the Tasmania environment for five years until November 2019.

This Policy will be reviewed before November 2019 to enable technological advances and likely impacts on markets to be understood before a decision on whether to further extend or amend the moratorium is made.

# Monitoring Program

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GMOs may in future provide opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of the State’s agricultural sector. However, the potential use of GMOs requires careful consideration to ensure there are no negative impacts on markets or on the State’s brand.

AgriGrowth Tasmania in the DPIPWE will implement an evidence-based GMO monitoring program to continuously assess developments in gene technology, to build a better understanding of consumer preference and supply chain dynamics, as well as market and branding implications.

The Program will seek stakeholder views and provide an annual report to the Minister on developments in gene technology and market changes.

Specific matters to be reported on annually include:

- development of new generation GMOs that provide health or other benefits;
- consumer sentiment in important current and potential future markets; and
- new gene technologies that provide positive benefits to primary industry sectors and Tasmania as a whole.

DPIPWE will advise the Minister if based on evidence, there are significant developments in these three specific matters that warrant triggering a review of this Policy before the maximum five (5) year review date.

The Tasmanian Government will strive to ensure that measures to safeguard Tasmania's GMO free status remain appropriate to a changing risk environment, particularly as more GMOs are adopted in international and national jurisdictions and in markets that supply products to Tasmanian primary industries.

AgriGrowth Tasmania will also monitor the risks associated with maintaining Tasmania's current GMO threshold levels and any alternative options.

## Pharmaceutical poppies

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The Government is maintaining the existing policy, held since 2009, that allows for the use of GMOs in pharmaceutical poppies not intended for use for food or feed, provided all statutory requirements are met and that markets for Tasmania's GMO-free food products can be maintained and appropriate co-existence arrangements developed.

In anticipation of the pharmaceutical poppy industry investing in research and development (R&D), AgriGrowth Tasmania in DPIPWE will work with the industry and key stakeholders on co-existence strategies for managing any potential risks associated with Genetically Modified (GM) non-food pharmaceutical poppies.

## Other GM plants and animals

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It is the Government's intention that all GM plants (other than non-food pharmaceuticals) and GM animals remain prohibited, except for gene technology used in contained research for, or production of, human medicines or therapeutics, closed loop industrial processes and animal feeds with non-viable GMO material.

The Government also wants to encourage biotechnology research innovation in Tasmania. The Government also supports research into other GMOs in Tasmania in contained facilities provided all statutory requirements are met.

## Conventional Research and Development

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The Tasmanian Government recognises the importance of research to primary industries in this State and acknowledges the tremendous capacity for innovation amongst local scientists, technical service providers and primary producers.

The Government is committed to better aligning research and development activities to improve productivity and industry competitiveness. Tasmania has the potential to be best in the world at conventional agricultural production.

Accordingly the Government will actively promote investment in non-GM research and development in primary industries, including non-GM crops and pastures.

## GMO free marketing opportunities

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The Tasmanian Government is committed to promoting an operating environment and policy settings that support our primary industries to grow. This includes protecting Tasmania's widely recognised brand attributes and unique biosecurity status.

Extending the moratorium on GMOs for a further five years enables farmers, agribusinesses and food businesses to confidently invest in their own marketing and market development activities to sell their products and to demonstrate the value of Tasmania's GMO-free status.

AgriGrowth Tasmania will also work with primary industry sectors to identify how our competitive advantages can play a greater role in Tasmania's premium brand attributes.

## IMPLEMENTATION

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The Gene Technology Regulator administers a national scheme for the regulation of GMOs in Australia in order to protect the health and safety of people and to protect the environment. The Regulator identifies risks posed by, or as a result of, gene technology and manages those risks through regulating certain dealings with GMOs.

Under the national scheme, States can regulate dealings with GMOs for marketing purposes.

The Tasmanian Government will continue to exercise its rights and meet its obligations under the National Scheme for Gene Technology Regulation, including the *Commonwealth Gene Technology*

*Act 2000 (Cth)*, its subordinate legislation, the *Gene Technology Regulations 2001* and the *Gene Technology (License Charges) Act 2000 (Cth)*.

This Policy, together with the Tasmanian Gene Technology Guidelines (“the Guidelines”) describe the dealings that may be authorised under the Tasmanian *Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act (2004)*.

The Guidelines also provide the operational details on how this policy will be implemented by DPIPWE, as the lead Agency for GMO policy for primary industries in Tasmania. The Policy and Guidelines may be amended by Cabinet.

The Guidelines will be published on the Department’s website ([www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au)).

## COMMUNICATION

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DPIPWE will develop communications materials and regularly engage in activities that explain developments in gene technology, GMOs, consumers and markets for all stakeholders.

The Department’s website will be used as the primary means of communication.

**Effective date of this Policy: August 2014**