



15<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

The Standing Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission

### **Agricultural Innovation**

Dear Committee,

#### **This submission focuses on the following terms of reference:**

- emerging technology relevant to the agricultural sector, in areas including but not limited to telecommunications, remote monitoring and drones, plant genomics, and **agricultural chemicals**.

Emerging technologies in the agricultural sector and the increasing use of harmful agricultural chemicals in urban areas as well as in crops for human and animal consumption, are of importance to adversely affected individuals, communities, their environment and to consumers generally.

Accordingly, this submission is from the perspective of citizens who support the views of following community networks: the Pesticide Action Group of Western Australia, Save Our Trees WA and the Alliance for a Clean Environment.

“Agricultural Innovation” implies better ways of working with nature and yet increasingly we find that controversial methods for the management of urban and agricultural land, particularly for the control of weeds and other pests, are being promoted and funded at the expense of environmentally sustainable options.

We ask the Committee to consider whether it was appropriate, as reported in The West Australian, 12 March 2016, for \$45 million dollars of grower levies from the Australian Grains Research and Development Corporation and our federal government to be used in a joint venture to develop more herbicides with the German pesticide company, Bayer, in view of the fact that it was the promotion of Glyphosate-based herbicides and farmers’ over- use of herbicides in the first place that led to herbicide resistant weeds.

We ask the Committee to be mindful of the fact that the Monsanto company, owner of 19.9% of WA’s crop-breeding company Intergrain and manufacturer of the controversial weed killer Roundup

and Roundup Ready GM seeds, will later this year be facing a tribunal at the International People's Court at The Hague for "Crimes Against Nature and Humanity".

With this knowledge we question why our governments are not increasing funding and general support to farmers who engage in more environmentally sustainable practices that protect the soils and the environment from poisons and degradation. In particular, we question the lack of protection for organic farmers from pesticide and GM contamination. The Marsh v Baxter lawsuit in Western Australia is a recent example of the lack of duty of care on the part of government to prevent foreseeable harm to organic and GM -free farmers.

There is strong evidence of consumer demand for "clean" pesticide free organic and GM-free food particularly for Australian organic infant formula. There is no comparable consumer demand for food containing pesticide and GM residues.

We ask the Committee to consider whether it was appropriate for the Minister for Agriculture to effectively ignore the concerns of the Pesticide Action Group of Western Australia and to reject the 2014 Call for a Royal Commission into the Use of Pesticides and Harm to Public Health - Petition 833/1300- in view of the mounting controversy nationally and internationally over the heavy use of a cocktail of pesticides including the herbicide, Glyphosate, a known likely cause of cancer, herbicide resistant weeds and die-back in trees.

In particular, we ask the Committee to consider why the weed killer Glyphosate and many other agricultural poisons are still routinely used on public land in urban areas as well as in agriculture in view of the serious risks to human health and the environment. How will inventing more poisons in the costly fight against nature be seen as acting in the best interests of consumers, their health and their environment?

What we need is more investment in agroecology for the protection of our health, sustainable weed and pest control for better protection of our water resources and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

We are strongly opposed to the funding of research into more poisons being promoted by government as "Agricultural Innovation". In 2014 we first raised concerns about the increased use of pesticides in the growing of GM crops. Please refer to Petition 833/1300 –

Call for a Royal Commission into the Use of Pesticides and Harm to Public health.

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Jones

Co chair

Pesticide Action Group of Western Australia

Save Our Trees WA

[www.pesticideactiongroupwa.com](http://www.pesticideactiongroupwa.com)

[www.saveourtrees.net](http://www.saveourtrees.net)

PO Box 474 Nedlands WA 6009

Jane Bremmer

Alliance for a Clean Environment