Anthony Bongers (Tony)
PO Box 6 Jambin Q 4702

Attention: Productivity Commission

My name is Tony Bongers and I have been broadacre farming at Jambin in Central Queensland for more than 45 years, mainly dryland cropping with some irrigation, although we are now moving into cattle as well. I have experienced many droughts and floods from the 70s to current times and have seen farming systems change from full cultivation on virgin soils, to zero till controlled traffic using poisons to control our weeds.

I am now very concerned about the over use of chemicals and what it is doing to our entire food chain including soil health, food quality and human health, as well as soil erosion and damage to the environment through to the oceans.

As the soils degrade in fertility and organic carbon levels, they are losing their ability to fight off pests and diseases. We are having more trouble with weeds and more inputs and chemical fixes are being offered as the only options to control them. Therefore I have been forced into researching contemporary scientific based alternatives to heavy chemical use, and it is obvious that there has not been much understanding regarding just how important the soil biology is in sustainable agriculture and how chemical agricultural farming practices are slowly destroying our soil ecosystems. The same can be seen in our health system, where current science has now found how important the microbiome is for our bodies for a healthy lifestyle.

This leads one to glysophate which is a powerful antibiotic which kills mostly the good biology and the pathogens get worse. It is also a chelator of certain minerals in the soil, so they're not available to the plants, which causes more problems because of out of balance nutrition. Because of its overuse around the world, weed resistance is a big problem, and with the higher application rates, it has been proved both overseas and in Australia that gylsophate is building up in the soils with overuse and is causing damage to the next crop with its residual effects.

Scientists around the world are finding out how dangerous glysophate is, as it is in the food chain and causing health issues. Many countries are banning its use in certain areas and in situations like desiccation where there is only seven days withholding period before crops can be harvested.

There is now so much evidence worldwide against the use of glysophate that governments in Australia should be very careful in what they allow to come into our country. We should stipulate that long term independent studies need to be carried out, especially on GM Roundup ready crops, as 90% of the world's GM crops are to do with the already overused glysophate trait which makes the contamination of our food supply much worse. We don't want to be the tale of unintended consequences if some new technologies are not fully tested. Science is never absolute.

We have to be very careful when we are dealing with human health and the long term affects that could be detrimental to personal health and expensive to our society health system. It is evident that food labelling needs to include imported GM products, so that the consumer has every opportunity to make an informed choice before purchasing any food product.

We don't want GM crops in Australia, as export markets are paying 10% less for GM canola compared to conventional canola. GM crops do not increase yield potential and sometimes decrease it.

GM roundup ready crops increase the use of already excessive amounts of glyphosate, which is causing glyphosate resistant superweeds. In the USA feeding studies on lab animals and farm livestock have found that some GM crops have toxic or allergenic effects which may arise from the GM crops itself or from residues of the chemicals used on them, which are causing many problems.

GM crops are contaminating conventional and organic crops, which removes the choice of consumers to eat GM free and organic foods. Some GM foods have been found to be less nutritious than their non GM counterparts.

Conventional plant breeding continues to outperform GM in producing crops with useful traits such as tolerance to extreme weather conditions and poor soils, improved nutrient utilizations, complex - trait disease resistance and enhanced nutritional value.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Anthony Bongers (Tony)