



MEDIA STATEMENT

AMENDED GENE TECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS TO PROVIDE CLARITY TO THE SEED INDUSTRY

13 NOVEMBER 2019 (CANBERRA)

The Australian Seed Federation (ASF) welcomes the passage of the amended Gene Technology Regulations through the Senate.

Throughout history, farmers have been breeding plants for the best characteristics, like disease resistance and drought tolerance. The lengthy process of observing, selecting and breeding could take years or even decades to complete. Today, scientists can use gene editing to make more precise, targeted changes to improve plants and provide solutions to a variety of challenges.

The amendments that passed through the Senate today will strengthen the regulation of gene editing techniques in Australia and bring us into line with our major trading competitors. These amendments will provide clarity to Australian seed breeders regarding the regulatory status of gene editing techniques.

Gene editing makes precise, intentional and beneficial changes in the genetic material of plants and animals used in food production, which can improve health, nutrition and environmental stewardship.

Access to gene editing techniques will also help farmers keep pace with the growing demand for more and better food, while using less water, land, nutrients and other resources.

The amendments to the Gene Technology Regulations will ultimately secure Australian farmers' access to better seeds in a timely and cost-effective way by facilitating innovation and meeting the needs of sustainable agricultural production. The ASF encourages the government to continue its efforts to implement the recommendations of the 2018 Review of the Gene Technology Scheme to further enhance Australian agricultural productivity.

The ASF recognises the bipartisan support of the Coalition Government and the Australian Labor Party for securing the passage of these amendments that are crucial to securing Australia's agricultural productivity and future sustainability.

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About the Australian Seed Federation

The ASF is the peak national body representing the interests of Australia's sowing seed industry at the state, national and international levels. The ASF membership base comprises stakeholders from all sectors of the seed supply chain including plant breeders, seed growers, seed processors and seed marketers.

The ASF supports choice in relation to crop biotechnology provided that the choice is based on sound science and respects the rights of others to also choose.