

## GRAINGROWERS SEED REPORT CALLS FOR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR GENETICS ACCESS

**20 November 2024**

GrainGrowers has called on the federal government to work with industry to ensure Australian growers can tap into biotechnology developments and deliver timely access to innovative crop genetics.

Releasing its Seeds – Inputs of the Future report, GrainGrowers said access to the latest crop genetics and technology was vital for Australian growers to maintain global competitiveness.

GrainGrowers Rural Affairs and Advocacy Manager, Sean Cole said the time taken to bring a new seed to market required a regulatory environment that supported innovation.

“For Australia to be competitive, we need the government to work with the grains industry and the supply chain to provide growers access to high-performing varieties.”

“The right regulatory environment will encourage investment in Australia’s research programs and help drive innovation by seed breeders and growers.”

Mr Cole said the use of biotechnology in plant breeding had opened opportunities for industry and new challenges for regulators.

“From an industry perspective, the application of biotechnology – such as molecular markers targeting genetic traits, new breeding techniques and gene technology – can reduce the time required to deliver varietal improvements.”

“The role of the independent regulators, the Office of Gene Technology Regulator and Food Standards Australia and New Zealand, in underpinning consumer confidence in the use of biotechnology is vital.”

“If we are to leverage the available technology and developments in plant breeding, it is crucial that we keep up with the international regulatory environment and standards. Falling behind will act as a disincentive for investment, reducing the opportunity for innovation and for maintaining a market advantage in this area,” he said.

Mr Cole said a conducive regulatory environment would give growers timely access to innovative crop genetics.

“The Australian grains industry is looking to identify the roles of stakeholders including growers, plant breeders, government, markets, the supply chain and manufacturers and their role in the adoption of these technologies to ensure future opportunities can be delivered efficiently.”

The report details the evolution of crop breeding in Australia over the past 30 years, highlighting the transition from a public to a private industry.

2.

With the transformation of plant breeding into a highly technical business, the report outlines that significant resources are required to fund ongoing development, with breeding companies recouping costs through either an upfront payment to purchase seed, or an end point royalty (EPR) collected once the crop has been harvested.

The upfront payment, primarily for hybrid plant varieties, typically makes the seed more expensive, with growers carrying the upfront cost and the risk of crop failure.

The EPR approach, where growers pay at harvest, provides flexibility and is reliant on accurate recording and grower compliance. Over recent years, reports of poor compliance with EPR arrangements have led to calls for more simplified and timely reporting to reduce the administrative burden on producers.

While the cost structures for companies vary, the report calls for systems that align strongly with business practices and encourage future investment in plant breeding to deliver long-term benefits to the Australian industry.

Mr Cole said new varieties are required to adapt to consumer and global market requirements and meet environmental challenges.

“Over time, new varieties have delivered significant gains in producing improved yields, increasing resistance to pests and disease, and better managing seasonal conditions.”

“Higher-yielding varieties are helping meet the growing demand for food, feed, fibre and biofuels, growing more food on the same amount of land. Importantly, these varieties often require fewer inputs such as water, fertilisers and pesticides, helping to further reduce the environmental footprint for Australian grain growers.”

“Having access to the latest innovations in seed varieties and technologies is vitally important, allowing growers to maintain an internationally competitive advantage and successfully adapt to environmental challenges,” Mr Cole said.

In addition to the Seeds – Inputs of the Future report, GrainGrowers also has a project under development examining the impact of the potential release of genetically modified and gene edited grain varieties in Australia.

The work will examine the readiness of the industry and identify challenges and opportunities throughout the value chain, assess grower needs, and understand actions required to prepare the industry.

The Seeds – Inputs of the Future report is available on the [GrainGrowers website](http://www.graingrowers.com.au).

END