

COUNCIL POLICY



GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

Policy Number:	ENV-01
Responsible Department(s):	Development & Regulatory Services
Relevant Delegations:	As per the Delegations Register and as detailed in this Policy
Other Relevant Policies:	NIL
Relevant Procedure(s):	NIL
Relevant Legislation:	<i>Genetically Modified Crops Management Act 2004</i>
Policies and Procedures Superseded by this policy on its Adoption:	25 September 2012, Item 10.3, 242 9 December 2014, Item 14.5, 271 18 December 2018, Item 12.8, 333
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Next Review:	No later than December 2025 or as required by legislation or changed circumstances

Version Control

Version No.	Date of Effect	Description of Change(s)	Approval
1.0	09/10/2012	New Policy	Council - Res 242/12
1.1	10/02/2015	Minor editorial changes	Council - Res 333/18
1.2	07/01/2019	Minor editorial changes	Council - Res 333/18
2.0	12/07/2022	Updated Policy template, formatting, editorial and content changes	Council - Res 159/22

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy has been prepared to state Council's position regarding the growing of genetically modified (GM) crops within the Adelaide Hills Council area, and to promote the protection of existing agricultural activities and enterprises from the potential negative impacts and lost opportunities because of GM agriculture.
- 1.2 The Policy outlines the general principles that will be applied in an instance where a change to the Council's adopted policy position in this instance is being contemplated.
- 1.3 Council considers that genetically modified crops have the potential (until proven otherwise) for irreversible and unforeseen serious environmental and economic impacts. Given the possibility of the introduction of genetically modified crops into the Council Region, there is a need to state Council's precautionary position on this issue.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of this policy are:
- To increase the level of sustainable agriculture within the Adelaide Hills Council area for current and future generations.
 - To state Council's position regarding the growing of genetically modified crops within the Adelaide Hills Council area.
 - To protect existing agricultural activities and enterprises from potential negative impacts and lost opportunities because of GM agriculture.
 - To link agricultural activity more closely with the protection of biological diversity and the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-support systems upon which agriculture and all other activities depend.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Crop** means 1. the cultivated produce of the ground, such as grain or fruit, while growing or gathered. 2. The yield of such produce for a particular season. 3. The yield of some other product in a season (i.e. the lamb crop). 4. A supply produced. (Source: Macquarie Dictionary 2009)
- 3.2 **environment** includes:
- (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts; and
 - (b) natural and physical resources; and
 - (c) the qualities and characteristics of locations, places, and areas. (Source: *Gene Technology Act 2000* (amended 2011).
- 3.3 **gene technology** means any technique for the modification of genes or other genetic material,

- (a) sexual reproduction; or
 - (b) homologous recombination; or
 - (c) any other technique specified in the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph. (Source: *Gene Technology Act 2000* (amended 2011).
- 3.4 **genetically modified crop** (also referred to as *genetically engineered [GE] crops* or *genetically modified organisms [GMO]*): a crop cultivar or variety that has been modified by a process of artificially inserting specific genes from a source organism into the gene sequence of another, with the purpose of producing specific traits in the resulting crop.
- 3.5 **genetically modified organism** means:
- (a) an organism that has been modified by gene technology; or
 - (b) an organism that has inherited traits from an organism (the initial organism), being traits that occurred in the initial organism because of gene technology; or
 - (c) anything declared by the regulations to be a genetically modified organism, or that belongs to a class of things declared by the regulations to be genetically modified organisms.
but does not include:
 - (d) a human being, if the human being is covered by paragraph (a) only because the human being has undergone somatic cell gene therapy; or
 - (e) an organism declared by the regulations not to be a genetically modified organism, or that belongs to a class of organisms declared by the regulations not to be genetically modified organisms. (Source: *Gene Technology Act 2000* (amended 2011).
- 3.6 **GMO** means a genetically modified organism. (Source: *Gene Technology Act 2000* (amended 2011).
- 3.7 **GM product** means a thing (other than a GMO) derived or produced from a GMO. (Source: *Gene Technology Act 2000* (amended 2011).
- 3.8 **Sustainable agriculture** means farming systems which meet the needs of society now and into the future by maintaining or improving profitable food and fibre production while conserving natural resources. (Source: *Macquarie Dictionary 2009*).

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 In Australia the Office of the Gene Technical Regulator approves GM crop varieties for commercial cultivation. The most common GM crops in commercial cultivation in Australia include Cotton, Canola and carnations.
- 4.1.2 Genetic modification is promoted to enhance food supply, by providing crops or animals with improved resistance to diseases, pests, herbicides, or climate variation, longer shelf life, better nutrition, flavour, colour, or texture, and higher yields.
- 4.1.3 Critics objections are based on a scepticism surrounding the scientific data available and concern about a lack of understanding of likely long-term physiological and health impacts on humans, and on surrounding crops, ecologies and related human and other food chains.

4.1.4 The spread of GM crop genes into adjoining non-GM farms is also a major concern.

4.1.5 There are also concerns about economic and social impacts due to these products being subject to intellectual property law. This may be a major problem in poor countries where genetic modification has the potential to ensure seeds for future crops are sterile unless “unlocked” with expensive chemical keys.

4.2 Genetically Modified Crops in South Australia

4.2.1 The *Genetically Modified Crops Management Act 2004* (the Act) is in place to control the cultivation of genetically modified crops in South Australia.

4.2.2 In 2020 Part 2 Section 5 of the Act that facilitated the moratorium on GM Crop cultivation within South Australia was amended. This Section now stipulates that only Kangaroo Island is designated as an area in which no genetically modified food crops may be cultivated.

4.3 Adelaide Hills Context

4.3.1 While some GM Crop varieties (i.e. canola) are available and being grown commercially in South Australia, none are currently grown in the Adelaide Hills Council area. This is a result of the agricultural profile where there is very little commercial cropping undertaken in the Hills.

4.3.2 Opposing genetically modified food crops being cultivated in the Adelaide Hills is a ‘no lose’ proposition. It is considered that such a position demonstrates support for local producers who already gain market access based on GM free status. In addition, opposing GM crop cultivation would come at no material detriment to other local producers who are indifferent, as there are currently no GM crop varieties available for commercial cultivation that would favour producers in the Council area.

5. **POLICY STATEMENT**

5.1 The Adelaide Hills Council does not support the growing of genetically modified crops within its District.

5.2 Council will work cooperatively with neighbouring councils where similar objectives have been sought in relation to the cultivation of Genetically Modified crops. Particularly where the potential for a regional designation would strengthen the marketing advantage of the Adelaide Hills, Barossa and Fleurieu regions as a premium food and beverage destination.

6. **REVIEW OF POLICY**

6.1 The following general principles will be applied in an instance where a change to the above stated Policy of the Adelaide Hills Council is being contemplated:

- The area of Genetically Modified Crops is fluid and can change rapidly. It is noted that flexibility to review and change policy is required to enable individuals, the agricultural industry, the community and/or government to adapt to and adopt change where appropriate.
- Public Consultation is paramount in this instance. Any changes to the intent of this Policy shall provide an opportunity for public input and debate/discussions before any changes are made.
- Council is aware of the need for agricultural industry to remain internationally competitive and as a result Council considers that there should be flexibility to review this policy position in order to demonstrate support for the industry where required in order to respond to specific market forces and requirements.
- If any legislative changes are proposed, then Council considers that the widest possible public consultation be undertaken by the State Government. Council would seek to have the opportunity to consider all issues and then comment on those that are appropriate. Where a legislative change by the State Government relating to GM crops impacts on the Council's policy position, then the Policy shall be reviewed as expeditiously as possible.

7. DELEGATION

7.1 The Chief Executive Officer has the delegation to:

- Approve, amend, and review any procedures that shall be consistent with this Policy; and
- Make any legislative, formatting, nomenclature, or other minor changes to the Policy during the period of its currency.

8. AVAILABILITY OF THE POLICY

8.1 This Policy will be available via the Council's website www.ahc.sa.gov.au.