

## Anti-GMO policies stifling response to Australia's growing farm pest problem

South Australian Liberal Senator Sean Edwards says an outbreak of beet western yellow virus has “blindsided” croppers in his home State this season.

But he believes the potential solution – strengthened plant biotechnology research – is being stifled by SA Agriculture Minister Leon Bignell’s penchant for putting politics ahead of science based policy-making.

Senator Edwards said some growers have lost between 10 and 15 percent of their canola crops, with a significant reduction anticipated next year if the virus continues. But he said the situation has been worsened because aphids spreading the crop disease are resistant to the three major chemical groups used to control them.

“This is an incredibly concerning prospect, as canola accounts for 40 to 50 percent of the cropping rotation in the Lower Eyre Peninsula,” he said.

“Should the aphids develop further resistance to (the chemical pesticide) Transform, the outcome would be devastating as yields would reduce, affecting South Australia’s nearly 415,000 tonnes of canola for export.” Senator Edwards said the key question was how to solve this problem.

“I suggest the solution lies with the further development of plant science in Australia, particularly in the area of genetically modified (GM) organisms,” he said. According to the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator, 12 of 36 active trial sites are seeking to develop GM canola with desirable traits.

**Read the full, original article:** [GM politics stifling good policy: Edwards](#)