

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2011-12
19 October 2011

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: CSIRO PLANT INDUSTRY

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 19 October 2011, pages 9 and 10)

QUESTION No.: SI-7

Senator XENOPHON:I want to go to the issue of how many partnerships CSIRO Plant Industry—CPI—currently has with agricultural biotech companies.

Mr Whelan: It has a significant number. I would have to take the detail on notice, but Plant Industry does a lot of work in the agricultural sector. Often the pathway to market is industry, so it typically partners with industry to transfer technology.

Senator XENOPHON: By contrast—and again you might want to take this on notice—how much money is spent on those projects with agricultural biotech companies and how much is CSIRO Plant Industry spending on research or development relating to organic or biological farming systems?

Mr Whelan: I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

CSIRO Plant Industry and the Food Futures Flagship work with a wide range of state and commonwealth agencies, research and development corporations, universities (national and international), overseas research agencies, philanthropic groups, and private companies (both national and international). Currently, partnerships or alliances exist between CSIRO and five agricultural biotechnology companies (Arcadia, Arista, Bayer, Nufarm and Monsanto).

Between CSIRO Plant Industry and the Food Futures Flagship the total expenditure on projects with these five partners is approximately \$9 million. Setting this in context, CSIRO Plant Industry and the Food Futures Flagship together spend a total of approximately \$36 million (from all sources) on conventional and GM approaches to cereal germplasm enhancement.

With regard to research and development aimed at crop agronomy and biological farming systems, all of CSIRO Plant Industry's expertise and capability in that area is deployed to undertake work in the Sustainable Agriculture Flagship. The total cost of employing those Plant Industry staff is approximately \$7 million, although across CSIRO as a whole there is considerably more invested in sustainability issues. For example, the expenditure on Sustainable Agriculture Flagship activities is budgeted to be approximately \$65 million for 2011-12 and other relevant work is also undertaken in our water and environment research areas.