



Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

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UPDATE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ON INTENTIONAL RELEASES OF GMOs from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator's national website is continuing to be a popular source of information and interest to the public about the regulation of GMOs in Australia, Dr Sue Meek, the Commonwealth Gene Technology Regulator, said today.

Announcing that she had placed information on the Office's website today about the approval of three new licences to conduct limited and controlled releases of genetically modified (GM) cotton, Dr Meek said she had received a number of new licence applications for limited and controlled releases of GM crops since she assumed the position of Regulator in December last year.

"On 19th January 2002 I announced the granting of the first licence under the *Gene Technology Act 2000*, to Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd in Queensland for a field trial of genetically modified cotton," Dr Meek said.

"I have now made a decision to issue three licences in respect of applications from the CSIRO and from Agriculture Western Australia to undertake field trials of genetically modified (GM) cotton.

"The GM cotton proposed for release under these three applications has been modified by the introduction of genes from common soil bacteria. The aim of the genetic modification is to increase the cotton's resistance to insect pests. Some of the cotton has also been modified to make it tolerant to a herbicide," Dr Meek said.

"As with the first approved licence, I made these decisions after extensive consultation on the risk assessment and risk management plans for these applications with the public, State and Territory governments, Commonwealth agencies, the Federal Environment Minister, the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee and relevant local councils, as required by the *Gene Technology Act 2000*.

Dr Meek said it is the clear intention of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* that the work of the OGTR be transparent and open and the OGTR website is being continually updated with relevant information for the benefit of the public.

"Even though it's not required by the legislation, as licence applications are received for dealings with GMOs that involve intentional release to the environment, they are posted on the website as *Early-Bird* notifications," Dr Meek said.

"The notifications foreshadow the opportunity for the public to comment on the risk assessment and risk management plans that are prepared for each of these applications.

"I encourage the public and the media to keep watching the *What's New* section of the OGTR website and to register their email address with us if they would like direct information, as soon it becomes available, about licence applications which are under consideration and our calls for input into the process."

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