



**Office of the Gene Technology Regulator**

THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

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GTR01/03

1 April 2003

## **GENE TECHNOLOGY REGULATOR RELEASES BAYER GM CANOLA RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Commonwealth Gene Technology Regulator, Dr Sue Meek, today released for public comment a Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan for the Bayer CropScience (formerly Aventis) application to commercially release genetically modified (GM) canola throughout Australia.

The Plan has been released for an extended, eight (8) week period of public scrutiny and comment until 26 May 2003.

"Over the past nine months I have thoroughly investigated the possible impact of the release of seven varieties of Bayer's canola drawing on the expertise of a range of expert groups and key stakeholders to assist me in my deliberations," Dr Meek said.

"The conclusion I have reached from these exhaustive assessments is that this GM canola poses no higher risk to human health and safety or the environment than is currently posed by the farming of conventional, non-genetically modified canola.

"As with the non-GM product, the genetically modified crop is of minimal risk. Therefore, only ongoing oversight requirements are included in the proposed licence conditions that I have set down in the draft risk assessment and risk management plan."

Dr Meek said all of the GM canola varieties proposed by Bayer have been previously trialled under limited and controlled conditions in Australia and, as canola oil is used in human food, their oils have all been assessed and approved by the responsible food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

"I have closely examined an extensive range of possible risks including potential for toxicity, allergenicity, gene transfer to other crops, the likelihood of creating problem weeds and possible impacts on wildlife and soil microorganisms but have found no appreciable risks that would adversely affect human health or the environment," Dr Meek said

Dr Meek said the commercial decision of whether or not to grow GM canola is outside the scope of the Gene Technology Act but she understood the concerns within the community about market and trade issues posed by the introduction of GM crops in Australia.

"There are a number of industry-focussed initiatives proposing ways for GM and non-GM canola to co-exist and I encourage farmers and the public to become fully informed about all aspects of GM crops," she said.

The GM canola proposed for release by Bayer incorporates a novel breeding system using gene technology to produce hybrid canola varieties that will be marketed under the trade name *InVigor*.

Traditional breeding techniques are used to develop hybrid plants which display improved agronomic performance, known as *hybrid vigour*, but this is the first time in Australia that gene technology would be applied commercially to achieve the same effect.

The Bayer canola has also been modified to incorporate tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate ammonium which potentially provides additional weed control options when the crop is being grown.

Further information on the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (the final version of which will form the basis of the Regulator's decision on the application) is available from the OGTR at [www.ogtr.gov.au](http://www.ogtr.gov.au). Comments on the assessment close on **26 May 2003**.

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