



Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON MONSANTO GM CANOLA RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Australian Gene Technology Regulator, Dr Sue Meek, today released for public comment the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan for Monsanto Australia's application to commercially release genetically modified Roundup Ready[®] canola.

The Plan has been released for an eight week consultation period which will close on 28 November 2003. The Regulator will not make a decision until comments from this consultation have been taken into account.

Roundup Ready[®] canola has been modified to be tolerant to the herbicide glyphosate, which can then be used to control weeds while the crop is being grown.

Monsanto's Roundup Ready[®] canola has been previously trialed under limited and controlled conditions in Australia over a number of years. The oil from Roundup Ready[®] canola (which has DNA and protein removed during processing) has previously been assessed and approved for human consumption by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

"The national gene technology regulatory system is designed to address risks to human health, safety and the environment that may be posed by genetically modified organisms. An extensive range of possible risks including potential for toxicity, allergenicity, increased environmental competitiveness, and adverse effects from gene transfer have been thoroughly investigated in developing this Risk Assessment," Dr Meek said.

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) released today found that Roundup Ready canola[®] is as safe to human health, safety and the environment as conventional (non-GM) canola.

The effectiveness, low toxicity and minimal persistence of glyphosate make it an important agricultural chemical. The Regulator is therefore also interested in the potential impact of the proposed release on herbicide use.

The RARMP identifies the potential for development of herbicide-resistant weeds if glyphosate is used inappropriately and notes that the use of glyphosate on Roundup Ready[®] canola will require approval by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

The APVMA considers product efficacy as part of its assessment process for all herbicide registrations. As an outcome of this process it may be necessary to implement herbicide resistance management plans. This potential for development of herbicide resistance has been comprehensively assessed by the APVMA. The APVMA will address potential herbicide resistance by placing registration conditions on the use of Roundup Ready® herbicide.

The Regulator strongly supports the APVMA imposing appropriate conditions on the application of Roundup Ready® herbicide to counteract the risk of increased resistance associated with the proposed extension of use of glyphosate.

“I welcome comments on this consultation version of the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan relating to the protection of human health and safety or the environment. Feedback from the consultation will be very helpful in finalising the Plan, which will then form the basis of my decision on whether or not to issue a licence to Monsanto.”

Further information on the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan and the evaluation process is available from the OGTR website at www.ogtr.gov.au. Comments close on **28 November 2003**.

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