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MEDIA RELEASE

FIRST GENETICALLY MODIFIED PLANT ON AUSTRALIAN 'GMO REGISTER'

After eleven years of commercial production and distribution in Australia, four carnations have become the first genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to be placed on the Australian 'GMO Register'.

The Australian Gene Technology Regulator can place items on the 'GMO Register' that have been previously licensed, pose minimal risks and are sufficiently safe to be used by anyone without the need for a licence.

"These four carnation lines have undergone extensive evaluation, public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny" the Gene Technology Regulator, Dr Meek said.

"Over 5 million of these carnation flowers have been sold worldwide with no reports of adverse effects on human health and safety or the environment".

The flower colour of the carnations (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) has been genetically modified by inserting two common genes from petunias and pansies which make blue flower pigments.

As a result of the genetic modification, the four carnation lines developed by the Australian company Florigene Pty Ltd have violet/mauve/purple flowers. The flowers are sold under the trade names of Moonlite™, Moonshade™, Moonshadow™ and Moonvista™.

All four GM carnation lines also contain a marker gene that makes them tolerant to a herbicide. This helped with the selection of modified plants during their early development in laboratories.

The four carnation lines have previously been licensed by the Gene Technology Regulator and in 2004 Florigene Pty Ltd applied to have the carnations added to the GMO Register.

The Regulator obtained additional data from the company, reviewed the latest scientific literature, and sought advice from the public, the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee, relevant Australian Government agencies, and State and Territory Governments.

No risks to human health and safety or the environment were identified during this process and in November 2006, the determination (which is a 'disallowable instrument') was tabled in the Australian Parliament. The statutory perusal for the scrutiny by Parliament has expired and the Regulator has now placed the carnations on the GMO Register.

More information on this GMO Register entry is available on the Gene Technology Regulator's website: <http://www.ogtr.gov.au/reg/reg001.htm>

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