

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE DIR 063/2005:
LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY
MODIFIED COTTON**

What is this licence for?

Hexima Ltd has obtained approval to undertake a small scale, limited and controlled release of a GM cotton line with enhanced fungal resistance. The release will take place at up to three sites in the shires of Pittsworth (QLD), Narrabri or Moree Plains (NSW) over a maximum total area of one hectare during each of the three summer cotton growing seasons of 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09.

How has the GM cotton been altered?

The GM cotton line contains a gene, known as a 'defensin' gene, from another plant (ornamental tobacco). The GM cotton plants also contain an antibiotic resistance marker gene from a common soil bacterium, which helped identify and select modified plants during their development in the laboratory.

What are the effects of the genetic modification?

The protein expressed by the new plant defensin gene is expected to inhibit the growth of certain fungi and enhance the GM plants' resistance to three major fungal diseases of cotton: Fusarium wilt, Verticillium wilt and black root rot.

What is the purpose of the release?

This trial involves early stage ('proof of concept') research to test the ability of the GM cotton line to resist infection by major fungal pathogens of cotton. In addition, Hexima will also compare the agronomic performance of this line with conventional (non-GM) cotton varieties that exhibit some resistance to Fusarium wilt or Verticillium wilt.

Could this trial pose a risk to commercial cotton crops in Australia?

The trial will be conducted under conditions that control the spread and persistence of the GM cotton plants and their introduced genes.

What controls have been imposed for this release?

A range of licence conditions have been imposed including: limiting the size, location and duration of the release; measures to restrict the spread of GM plant materials; ensuring that transport and storage of the GMO is in accordance with OGTR guidelines; and monitoring for, and destroying, any cotton plants on the release site for twelve months after harvest.

None of the GM plant materials are permitted to be used as human food or for animal feed. Full details of the imposed licence conditions are available on the OGTR website. They were developed based on the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) that was prepared for this application, which formed the basis of the Regulator's decision to issue the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the OGTR website (<<http://www.ogtr.gov.au>> under "What's New") or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the complete RARMP (containing a summary of the submissions received through the consultation process with prescribed experts, agencies and authorities and the public), an Executive Summary, a Technical Summary and the full Licence.