

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE APPLICATION DIR 068/2006: LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED TORENIA**

### **What is torenia?**

Torenia is a flowering plant that is popular throughout the world for growing in home gardens and landscaped areas, often in hanging baskets and patio planters.



### **What is this application for?**

Florigene Pty Ltd (Florigene) has obtained approval to grow nine genetically modified (GM) torenia lines outside the glasshouse environment at a single site in the City of Darebin, Victoria, from October 2007 to May 2008. The trial would involve growing up to 200 GM torenia plants in hanging baskets to evaluate how they perform in the outdoors. The trial will monitor horticultural characteristics such as the plant size, number and longevity of flowers, flower colour stability and susceptibility to pests and diseases compared to non-GM parent plants.

### **How has the GM torenia been altered?**

The GM torenia lines contain a number of gene sequences from common garden plants (geranium and snapdragon). They also contain an antibiotic resistance marker gene that helped identify and select modified plants during their early-stage development in the laboratory. The GM torenia lines were originally developed in Japan and seven generations have been propagated in contained glasshouses.

### **Why have the GM torenia been modified?**

The GM torenia contain up to three partial or complete gene sequences, which affect the production of different coloured pigments in flowers. The nine GM torenia lines produce a range of flower colours including white, blue with white sectors, pale pink, dark pink and pale yellow. These colours contrast with the blue/purple flowers of non-GM torenia.

### **Will this trial cause harm to people or the environment?**

No. As the detailed risk assessment explains the introduced genes are naturally widespread in the environment (in a range of fruit, vegetables, native and exotic plants) and do not produce toxic or allergenic proteins. In addition, the parent cultivar does not produce viable pollen or seeds, hence the GM torenia also cannot reproduce without horticultural intervention and the introduced genes cannot transfer to other organisms.

### **What controls have been applied to this trial?**

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) that was prepared for this application, and formed the basis of the Regulator's decision to issue the licence, concluded that the proposed release poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, a range of licence conditions have been imposed to limit the release to the size, location and duration requested by the applicant as these were important considerations in the assessment process. They include measures to restrict the spread of GM plant materials; ensuring that transport and storage of the GM torenia lines are in accordance with OGTR guidelines; and monitoring for, and destroying, any torenia plants on the trial site. In addition, no products from the release would be used in human food or animal feed and GM plant material not required for further research will be destroyed.

### **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 a copy of the full licence.