

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE DECISION DIR 080/2007: LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED WHEAT**

### **What is this licence for?**

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI Victoria) has obtained approval to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, approximately 50 wheat lines that have been genetically modified (GM). The release will take place at one site in the local government areas of Horsham and Mildura, Victoria, on a maximum total area of 0.4 hectares per year between June 2008 and March 2010.

### **What is the purpose of the trial?**

The aim of the trial is to assess the agronomic performance of the GM wheat lines under rain-fed, drought prone field conditions and to conduct experiments to measure the expression and effectiveness of the introduced genes. None of the GM wheat is permitted to be used as human food or animal feed.

### **How have the GM wheat lines been modified?**

The GM wheat lines have been modified to contain one of fifteen genes originally isolated from the plants thale cress and maize, a moss and a yeast. The introduced genes are intended to increase the GM plants' tolerance to drought.

All of the GM wheat lines contain an antibiotic resistance gene and a herbicide tolerance gene. These genes were used as selectable markers during the initial development of the GM plants in the laboratory. The antibiotic resistance gene does not function in plants and the applicant does not intend to apply the herbicide (glufosinate ammonium) during the field trial.

### **Is this the first field trial of these GM wheats in Australia?**

This trial would continue research on the GM wheat lines that were approved for release under licence DIR 071/2006. However, the trial also contains some new GM wheat lines which have not been released previously.

### **What controls have been imposed on this release?**

The finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) that was prepared for this limited and controlled release 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, locations and duration requested by the applicant as these were important considerations in the evaluation process. Control measures to restrict the spread and persistence of the GMOs and the introduced genes include ensuring that transport and storage of the GM plant materials are in accordance with OGTR guidelines, and monitoring for, and destroying, any volunteer plants on the release site for at least twenty four months after final harvest and until no volunteers are detected for 6 months.

### **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 finalised RARMP, an Executive Summary, a Technical Summary and a copy of the full licence.