

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE DECISION DIR 083/2007: LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED COTTON**

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

CSIRO has obtained approval to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, up to 20 cotton lines that have been genetically modified (GM). The release will take place at one site in the local government area of Narrabri, NSW, on a maximum total area of 0.3 ha (0.1 hectare per year) between October 2008 and May 2011.

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

The purpose of the trial is to conduct proof of concept experiments with the GM cotton to assess their tolerance to waterlogging. The GM cotton plants from this trial will not be used for either human food or animal feed or in the production of fabrics or other cotton products.

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

Each cotton line contains one or more of three genes derived from either thale cress or cotton. The introduced cotton gene will have a different expression pattern from the native gene. The introduced genes make proteins that are expected to improve waterlogging tolerance. Similar proteins occur naturally in a range of organisms, including plants widely consumed by people and animals.

All of the GM cotton lines also contain one or two antibiotic resistance selectable marker genes, which were used to identify transformed plants during initial development of GM plants in the laboratory. Both of these genes are from common gut bacteria.

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

There have been no previous releases of these cotton lines in Australia. However, a licence has been issued under the present system for field trials of GM cotton containing one of these genes (DIR 067/2006), and GM cotton lines containing another of these genes have been trialled under the former voluntary regulatory system overseen by the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Committee.

### **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, location 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 twelve months after final harvest and until no volunteers are detected for the last six months of the monitoring period.

### **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.