

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE DECISION DIR 103 FOR LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA

What is this licence for?

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI Victoria) has received approval to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, up to 10 lines of genetically modified (GM) canola. The field trial will take place at two sites in the Victorian local government areas of Horsham and Southern Grampians, on a maximum area of 0.8 ha per growing season, between August 2010 and May 2012.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the trial is to conduct experiments to evaluate agronomic performance, including seed yield, of the GM canola lines under field conditions. Some seed will be collected and retained for analysis and possible future trials, subject to further approval(s). Material from the GM canola will not be used in human food or animal feed.

How have the GM canola lines been modified?

The GM canola lines contain an introduced gene derived from a common soil bacterium that is expected to enhance yield and delay leaf senescence in the GM canola plants. The GM canola lines also contain an antibiotic resistance gene derived from a common gut bacterium. This gene was used to identify genetically modified plant cells during initial development of the GM plants in the laboratory.

What controls have been imposed for this release?

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for this application concluded that the release poses negligible risks to people and 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 assessment process. As well as limits on the scale of the release, control measures have been imposed to restrict the spread and persistence of the GMOs and their introduced genetic material. These include ensuring that the GM canola plants in the field are surrounded by a pollen trap and are isolated from non-GM canola and other related plants; that transport and storage of the GM plant materials are in accordance with the Regulator's guidelines; and that release sites are monitored for any volunteer canola plants, and any volunteers destroyed, for at least two years after harvest and until no volunteers are observed for a continuous 12 month 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.