

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON LICENCE DECISION DIR 107 FOR LIMITED & CONTROLLED RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED BANANA

What is this licence for?

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has received approval to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, up to 151 lines of genetically modified (GM) banana. The field trial will take place at one site in the local government area of Litchfield Municipality, Northern Territory, on a maximum area of 1.5 ha, between the date of issue of the licence and November 2014.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the trial is to conduct experiments to assess the disease response and/or development of the GM banana lines. Material from the GM banana plants would not be used in human food or animal feed.

How have the GM banana lines been modified?

Most of the GM banana lines contain one or two genes that are expected to confer disease resistance. The genes are derived from a range of naturally occurring organisms including viruses, bacteria and plant species. The remaining lines contain a visual marker gene derived from a common gut bacterium. All of the GM banana lines also contain an antibiotic resistance gene that was also derived from a common gut bacterium. This gene was used to identify transformed plants 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, location 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 banana plants are isolated from non-GM banana plants; transport and storage of the GM plant materials in accordance with the Regulator's guidelines; and monitoring the release site for at least 12 months after harvest, during which time any volunteer plants found must 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 finalised RARMP, an Executive Summary, a Technical Summary and a copy of the full licence.