Australian Government
Department of Health
Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

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Issue of licence DIR 133 to Bayer for a field trial of GM cotton

On 25 February 2015, the Gene Technology Regulator invited submissions on the consultation version of the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for licence application DIR 133 from Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd (Bayer).

The Regulator has now issued a licence in respect of application DIR 133, authorising the limited and controlled release (field trial) of cotton genetically modified (GM) for insect resistance and herbicide tolerance.

The release is authorised to take place between July 2015 and July 2021 at sites in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. The maximum planting area of the field trial is 120 hectares per year in the first two years and 600 hectares per year in the following four years.

The purpose of the trial is to assess the agronomic performance and pest resistance of the GM cotton grown under Australian field conditions, to evaluate crosses between the GMOs and non-GM commercial cotton cultivars, and to produce seed for future releases, subject to further regulatory approvals. The GM cotton is not permitted to be used in human food or animal feed.

The decision to issue the licence was made after consultation on the RARMP with State and Territory governments, Australian Government agencies, the Minister for the Environment, the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee, relevant local councils and the public, as required by the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and the corresponding State and Territory legislation.

Issues relating to the health and safety of people and the protection of the environment raised during the consultation process were considered in the context of current scientific information in reaching the conclusions set out in the finalised RARMP and in making the decision to issue the licence.

The finalised RARMP concludes that this limited and controlled release poses negligible risks to people and the environment. Licence conditions have been imposed to restrict spread and persistence of the GMOs and their genetic material in the environment and to limit the release in size, locations and duration, as these were important considerations in the evaluation process.

Appendix A of the RARMP summarises the advice received from prescribed experts, agencies and authorities, and indicates how issues raised relating to risks to human health and safety or the environment were considered in the document. No submissions were received from the public on the consultation RARMP.

A Summary and the finalised RARMP, together with a set of Questions and Answers on this decision and a copy of the licence, can be obtained on-line from the DIR 133 page of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator's website or requested via the contacts detailed below.

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