

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 146 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) banana

What is this licence for?

The Queensland University of Technology has received approval by the Gene Technology Regulator to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, banana plants that have been genetically modified for disease resistance. The field trial is permitted to take place at one site of up to 6 hectares in Litchfield Municipality, Northern Territory, for a period of 5 years.

How has the GM banana been modified?

The different types of GM banana plants will each contain one introduced gene out of the ten candidate genes being tested. The genes are intended to provide resistance to the fungal disease, Fusarium wilt (Panama disease). The candidate genes are from banana, except for one which is from a soil nematode. The GM banana plants may also contain a marker gene, from a common bacterium that allowed the GM plants to be selected during their initial development in the laboratory.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the field trial is to evaluate the level of disease resistance and agronomic performance of the GM banana plants under field conditions. The GM banana is not permitted to be used for human food or animal feed.

What controls have been imposed for this release?

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for this application concluded that the proposed release poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, a range of licence conditions will limit the size, location and duration of the release, as well as restrict the spread and persistence of the GM banana and the introduced genetic material. Control measures include conditions to isolate the trial site from banana crops, ensure secure transport and storage of the GMOs, and at the end of the trial, require inspection of the site for banana plants to ensure all GM plants are destroyed. A full list of the control measures are detailed in the licence.

What other approvals are required for this trial?

In addition to requirements by the Gene Technology Regulator, this field trial will remain subject to State and Territory laws that cover the cultivation and transport of bananas and control of plant diseases, including Banana Freckle disease.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the [DIR 146 page](#) of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1 800 181 030. These documents include the finalised RARMP, a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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