

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 164 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) canola

What does this licence allow?

A licence has been issued to Monsanto Australia Pty Ltd to grow canola plants that have been genetically modified for herbicide tolerance. The trial can take place for 4 years, in sites to be selected from 140 possible local government areas in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. The trial may be conducted at up to 15 sites with a maximum combined area of 30 ha in 2020, increasing to 20 sites with a maximum combined area of 100 ha in 2023.

How have the GM canola plants been modified?

The dicamba-tolerant canola line proposed for release contains a gene from a soil bacterium that will confer tolerance to dicamba herbicide. This canola line may also be crossed with a commercially approved GM canola, which contains an introduced gene for tolerance to glyphosate herbicides. This will produce GM canola with tolerance to both dicamba and glyphosate herbicides.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial is to assess the performance of the GM canola under field conditions in all canola growing areas of Australia. The GM canola grown in this field trial would not be used in human food or animal feed.

What controls are imposed for this release?

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for this application concludes that the field trial poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, as this is a field trial, the applicant must comply with a range of licence conditions that control when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial and impose restrictions on any canola leaving the trial sites. For example, there are licence conditions to minimise dispersal of the GMOs and GM pollen from the trial sites, to securely transport and store the GM canola, and to inspect the sites at the end of the trial to ensure that the GM plants are destroyed. Full details of these control measures are in the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the DIR 164 page of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the finalised RARMP, a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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