

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 166 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) chickpea

What does this licence allow?

The licence has been issued to Queensland University of Technology to grow chickpeas that have been genetically modified for drought and other environmental stress tolerance. The field trial can take place at a single site in Walkamin, Queensland, with a maximum area of 3 ha per season. The trial can be conducted from June 2019 until December 2024, which allows up to six growing seasons.

How has the GM chickpea been modified?

The researchers are studying drought tolerance in the GM chickpeas. The GM chickpeas would contain one of two genes that provide increased tolerance to drought. One gene comes from a plant that is commonly used as a model plant in research and the other gene is from a native grass that grows in dry, rocky areas. The genes are expected to enable plants to survive periods where conditions are very dry and to produce good yields following drought stress. The genes may also provide increased tolerance to other environmental stresses such as cold or salinity.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The aim of the field trial is to assess how the GM chickpeas perform under field conditions. The GM chickpeas grown in the field trial will 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, Queensland University of Technology must comply with a range of licence conditions that restrict when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial, and stop GM chickpea from spreading outside the trial. For example, there are conditions to isolate the trial site from other chickpea crops, to securely transport and store the GM chickpeas and to inspect the site at the end of the trial to check that the GM chickpeas are destroyed. Full details of these control measures are available in the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the [DIR 166](#) page of the [OGTR website](#) or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP), a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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