Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 189 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) sorghum

What is this application for?

The University of Queensland is requesting a licence to grow GM sorghum modified for an asexual seed formation trait. The field trial is proposed to take place between September 2022 and June 2025, on one site with a maximum area of one hectare per season. The trial site is located at the University of Queensland's Gatton Campus in the Lockyer Valley LGA in Queensland.

How has the GM sorghum been modified?

The GM sorghum contains an introduced gene for an asexual seed formation trait. The gene originates from a grass species. The gene is expected to allow the reproductive sorghum egg cell to undergo fertilisation in the absence of pollen and is one of several steps required for asexual seed production.

What is the purpose of the trial?

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

What controls are proposed for this release?

The consultation Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) prepared for this application concluded that the field trial poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, as this is a field trial under limited and controlled conditions, a number of licence conditions have been drafted to restrict when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial, and stop GM sorghum from spreading outside the trial sites. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other sorghum crops or sexually compatible species, to securely transport and store the GMOs, and to inspect the sites at the end of the trial to check that all GM plants are destroyed. Full details of the draft licence conditions are available in the consultation RARMP.

How can I comment on this application?

The full consultation RARMP and a summary of the RARMP for application DIR 189 are available on the OGTR website or via the contacts listed below. You are invited to submit your written comments (including email) on the consultation version of the RARMP, related to any risks to the health and safety of people or to the environment from the proposed release. Comments must be received by the close of the consultation period on **12 May 2022**.

What are the next steps in the evaluation process?

The RARMP will be finalised, taking into account submissions related to the protection of people or the environment. A de-identified summary of all comments received and consideration of those comments is included in the Appendices to the final RARMP. The finalised RARMP will inform the Regulator's decision on whether or not to issue a licence.

The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

OGTR Website

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