Australian Government

Department of Health

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee

28 April 2022

Communiqué

This Communiqué covers matters considered at the 30th videoconference of the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (28 April 2022)

The Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) is a statutory advisory committee established under the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (the Act) to provide scientific and technical advice to the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) and the Gene Technology Ministers' Meeting.

The Regulator seeks advice from GTTAC on licence applications to work with Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and on Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plans (RARMPs) prepared for applications. The purpose of this Communiqué is to provide a brief overview of GTTAC's consideration of applications and RARMPs and, in accordance with the Gene Technology Regulations 2001, to publish committee resolutions given to the Regulator. The Communiqué also provides an overview of any other deliberations of the committee. It does not include information which is treated as Confidential Commercial Information in accordance with the Act.

DEALINGS INVOLVING THE INTENTIONAL RELEASE OF A GMO

Dealings involving the Intentional Release (DIR) of a GMO into the environment can involve a limited and controlled release (clinical trial or field trial) or a commercial (general) release.

For commercial releases, the Regulator must seek GTTAC advice twice. The first consultation is on matters to consider when preparing the RARMP and the second is on the RARMP itself. For limited and controlled releases, the Regulator must seek GTTAC advice only once on the RARMP.

The RARMP for every DIR licence application is issued for public consultation. Information on how to obtain copies of DIR applications and RARMPs is provided at the end of this document.

ADVICE ON CONSULTATION RARMPS – LIMITED AND CONTROLLED RELEASE

DIR 188 – Limited and controlled release of canola and Indian mustard genetically modified for altered oil content and herbicide tolerance

Licence application DIR 188 from NuSeed Pty Ltd is for a field trial of GM canola and Indian mustard modified for altered oil content and herbicide tolerance. The trial would be conducted at up to 20 sites with a maximum planting area of 150 hectares each year from November 2022 to December 2027.

GTTAC noted the conclusion of the RARMP that risks to the health and safety of people or the environment from the proposed release are negligible. The Committee discussed the following topics:

- the likelihood of small amounts of oil derived from the GMOs being consumed during the sensory analysis
- the potential for outcrossing of the GMOs to commercial oilseed crops, noting the proposed licence conditions to manage this
- the potential for the genetic modification to cause unintended effects.

Resolutions

- The Committee agrees all plausible risk scenarios have been identified and did not identify additional relevant information.
- The Regulator should further consider the wording around human sensory trials.
- The Regulator should further consider the potential for outcrossing to commercial canola crops.
- The Committee agrees that the proposed limits and controls for the GM canola and Indian mustard are appropriate.
- The Committee agrees with the overall conclusion of the RARMP.

DIR 189 – Limited and controlled release of sorghum genetically modified for asexual seed formation

Licence application DIR 189 from The University of Queensland is for a field trial of GM sorghum modified for an asexual seed formation trait. The trial is proposed to take place between September 2022 and June 2025, on one site in Queensland with a maximum area of one hectare per season.

GTTAC noted the conclusion of the RARMP that risks to the health and safety of people or the environment from the proposed trial are negligible. The Committee discussed the following key topics:

- the possibility of the modification occurring in a background that would increase the likelihood of achieving asexual reproduction
- the use of different sorghum backgrounds containing the introduced gene in the trial
- the potential for ectopic seed formation
- the potential for flooding at the trial site, noting that the applicant stated the site is 300m away from the nearest creek and that DIR licences contain standard provisions for reporting and implementing contingency plans if a severe weather event affects a field trial.

Resolutions

- The Committee agrees that all plausible risk scenarios have been identified and did not identify additional relevant information that should be considered.
- The Committee agrees that the proposed limits and controls for the GM sorghum are appropriate.
- The Committee agrees with the overall conclusion of the RARMP.

ADVICE ON APPLICATIONS – COMMERCIAL RELEASE

DIR 191 – Commercial import and distribution of chrysanthemum genetically modified for altered flower colour

Licence application DIR 191 from International Flower Developments Pty Ltd is for commercial import of five types of GM chrysanthemum. If a licence is issued, cut flowers of GM chrysanthemum would be imported into Australia and sold to the public through florists and supermarkets. The OGTR is preparing a RARMP for the application expected to be released for public comment and advice from experts, agencies, and authorities in September 2022.

GTTAC discussed the potential for the GM chrysanthemums to be consumed, noting the GMOs would not be authorised for use in commercial human food or animal feed. The Committee discussed the effectiveness of treating cut flowers with glyphosate and whether this would be sufficient to prevent people from propagating the GM chrysanthemums.

Resolutions

- The Committee agrees that the matters identified by OGTR should be considered in the RARMP.
- The Regulator should consider the effectiveness of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment mandated glyphosate treatment.

ENQUIRIES AND RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS

For all enquiries and to obtain copies of applications or RARMPs for Dealings involving the Intentional Release (DIR) of GMOs into the environment, please call the OGTR on 1800 181 030 or email ogtr@health.gov.au. DIR RARMPs are also available on the OGTR website.