

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 203 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) cotton

What does this licence allow?

Monsanto Australia Pty Ltd has been issued a licence to grow GM cotton modified for herbicide tolerance and insect resistance. The trial will run from September 2024 to September 2029. The field trial may be conducted at up to 25 sites located in Vic, NSW, Qld, WA and NT, with a combined total area of 10 ha in 2024, 50 ha per year in 2025-2027 and 100 ha per year in 2028-2029.

How has the GM cotton been modified?

Up to 10 different GM cottons are proposed to be trialled. Some of the GM cottons contain introduced gene(s) that provide protection against certain insect pests of cotton, including caterpillars, bollworm, aphids and thrips. Some of the GM cottons contain introduced gene(s) for tolerance to glyphosate, glufosinate, a HPPD inhibiting herbicide, dicamba, and PPO-inhibiting herbicides. This enables the GM cotton plants to grow in the presence of these herbicides, which can be used to control weeds in the GM cotton crop.

Some of the GM cottons also contain selectable marker gene(s) derived from a common gut bacterium. These genes confer selective antibiotic resistance or expression of a reporter gene. They were used to select plants during laboratory development of the GM cotton and do not have any function when plants are grown in the field.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial will assess the performance of the GM cottons under field conditions. The GM cottons 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, Monsanto Australia Pty Ltd 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 cotton from spreading outside the trial. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other plant crops or sexually compatible species, to securely transport and store the GM cotton, and to inspect the sites at the end of the trial to check that the GM cottons 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 203](#) 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.

The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
Tel: 1800 181 030 E-mail: ogtr@health.gov.au
[OGTR Website](#)