Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 205 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) canola

What is this application for?

CSIRO is requesting a licence to grow canola genetically modified for increased abiotic stress tolerance. The field trial would be conducted in New South Wales and South Australia between May 2025 and December 2030, on up to 3 sites per year with a maximum area of 1.5 ha per site in the first year and 2 ha per site in the subsequent years.

How has the GM canola been modified?

The GM canola lines contain either a full length or shortened version of a gene derived from a yeast that is intended to increase the tolerance of the plants to environmental stress. The genes are expected to enable the GM plants to perform better under drought stress.

Some of the GM canola lines may also contain an introduced selectable marker gene from a common soil bacterium for tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate. This gene was used to select plants during laboratory development of the GM canola lines.

What is the purpose of the trial?

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

Has the GM canola received any other approvals?

The GM canola lines included in this application have not received any approvals in Australia or in any other countries.

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 canola from spreading outside the trial sites. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other canola 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 205 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 **23 August 2024**.

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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