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

What does this licence allow?

CSIRO has been issued a licence to grow GM canola modified for increased abiotic stress tolerance. The trial will run from May 2025 to December 2030. The field trial may be conducted at up to 3 sites located in New south Wales and South Australia, 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 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.

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, CSIRO 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 canola from spreading outside the trial. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other canola crops or sexually compatible species, to securely transport and store the GM canola, and to inspect the sites at the end of the trial to check that the GM canola is 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 205 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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