Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 212 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) canola

What is this application for?

The University of Adelaide is requesting a licence to grow GM canola modified for increased photosynthesis and photorespiration. The trial is proposed to take place between April 2025 and January 2030, on one site with a maximum area of 2 hectares per year. The trial site is located in Light Regional Council in South Australia.

How has the GM canola been modified?

The GM canola contains 3 introduced genes to increase photosynthesis and photorespiration. The genes come from other plants – either from cotton or from a plant that is commonly used as a model plant in research. The genes are expected to increase the yield of the GM canola and may also allow it to perform better under drought stress.

The GM canola also contains 2 selectable marker genes from common bacteria. These genes make the plants resistant to an antibiotic and tolerant to the herbicide glufosinate. These markers were used to select plants during laboratory development of the GM canola. Glufosinate will not be used on the GM canola in the field.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial is to assess the performance of the GM canola under field conditions. The GM canola 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 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 212 are available on the OGTR website, the consultation hub (search for DIR 212) or via the contacts listed below. You are invited to submit your written comments (via the consultation hub or by 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 **17 April 2025**.

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

Tel: 1800 181 030 E-mail: ogtr@health.gov.au