Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 215 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) canola

What is this application for?

Miruku Australia Pty Ltd is requesting a licence to grow GM canola modified for dairy protein production. The field trial is proposed to take place between May 2025 and December 2029, commencing with up to 1 hectare in 2025 and increasing to a maximum of 20 sites of up to 15 hectares each in 2029. Maximum total planting area proposed is 436 hectares over the 5 years of the trial. The trial sites are proposed to be located in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia.

How has the GM canola been modified?

The GM canola contains introduced genes for dairy protein production. The genes come from cattle and common plant species. The genes are expected to result in canola plants that produce a dairy protein in seeds.

The GM canola also contains an introduced gene for tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate, derived from a common soil bacterium. This gene was used to select plants during laboratory development of the GM canola and does not have any function when plants are grown in the field.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial aims 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 (maximum of 5 ha per site), 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 215 are available on the OGTR website, the consultation hub 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 **13 May 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

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