Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 153 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) sorghum

What is this application for?

The University of Queensland is seeking approval to grow sorghum plants that have been genetically modified for grain quality traits. It is proposed that the trial will take place between October 2017 and June 2020 in south-east Queensland. In the first year one site would be planted with an area of up to 1 hectare. In each of the second and third years up to 4 sites would be planted with a combined area of up to 5 hectares.

How will the GM sorghum be modified?

The GM sorghum plants each contain up to two introduced genes or gene fragments derived from sorghum. The genetic modifications lead to increased seed protein content, increased seed protein digestibility, increased seed size and/or a larger number of seeds.

All GM sorghum plants will also contain an introduced antibiotic resistance gene from a common gut bacterium. This was used as a selectable marker during development of the GM plants in the laboratory.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the field trial is to assess the agronomic characteristics, yield and grain quality of the GM sorghum plants under field conditions. The GM sorghum would not be used in human food or sold as animal feed. Ground GM sorghum seed may be used in an experimental poultry feeding trial.

What controls are proposed for this release?

A range of licence conditions have been drafted to limit the size, locations and duration of the release, and to require training for all people who work with the GM sorghum. Control measures include conditions to minimise dispersal of the GMOs or GM pollen from trial sites, to securely transport and store the GM seed, and to inspect trial sites after completion of the trial to ensure all GM plants are destroyed. Full details of the draft licence conditions are set out in the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) prepared for the application, which is now available for comment.

How can I comment on this application?

You are invited to submit your comments on the consultation version of the RARMP that has been prepared for application DIR 153. The full consultation RARMP and a summary are available on the What's New page of the OGTR website or via the Freecall number below. Your advice would be appreciated on any risks to the health and safety of people or to the environment that may be posed by the proposed release. Please note that the consultation period closes on **26 June 2017** and written submissions are required by that date.

What are the next steps in the evaluation process?

Submissions relating to the protection of people or the environment in connection with the proposed release are taken into account in finalising the RARMP, which will then inform the Regulator's decision on whether or not to issue a licence.

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