

Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 157 – commercial release of genetically modified cotton

What is this application for?

Syngenta Australia Pty Ltd is seeking approval for commercial cultivation of a genetically modified (GM) cotton line in Australia. The GM cotton has been modified for insect resistance.

Where will this cotton be grown?

The aim of the release is to allow the commercial production of this GM cotton line in all cotton growing areas of Australia. Commercial cotton production occurs mainly in New South Wales, southern and central Queensland, and northern Victoria, and on a trial basis in northern Queensland, northern Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

How has the GM cotton been modified?

The GM cotton contains an introduced gene for insect resistance. This gene is derived from a common soil bacterium. The gene encodes a protein that is toxic to specific pest insects that cause major yield losses in cotton crops.

The GM cotton also contains a selectable marker gene from a common gut bacterium. This gene confers antibiotic resistance. It was used to select plants during laboratory development of the GM cotton and does not have any function when plants are grown in the field.

How is this GM cotton different from existing commercial GM cotton?

In 2016/17 most of the Australian cotton crop was planted to GM Bollgard®3 varieties, which contain three insecticidal genes. This GM cotton line contains one of the insect resistance genes present in Bollgard®3. Other GM cottons have also been approved by the Regulator, but these are currently not widely grown.

What is the process for considering this application?

The licence application will be subject to comprehensive, science-based risk analysis. The process includes two rounds of stakeholder consultation. In the first round, the Regulator will seek advice from prescribed experts, agencies and authorities prior to preparing a draft Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP). The RARMP focuses on identifying risks to people and to the environment that may be posed by the commercial release. Following public release of the draft RARMP, submissions will again be sought from stakeholders, this time including the public. The RARMP will then be finalised taking into account submissions received. The final RARMP will inform the Regulator's decision whether or not to issue a licence.

Has this GM cotton received any other approvals in Australia?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is responsible for food safety. FSANZ has approved the use of food derived from this GM cotton line.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has regulatory responsibility for agricultural chemicals, including herbicides and insecticidal products. APVMA has approved Vip3A, the insecticidal protein expressed in the GM cotton, for commercial scale release.

How can I comment on this application?

The comprehensive RARMP for this application is expected to be released for public comment in **December 2017**. Its release will be advertised in newspapers, and it will be available on the OGTR website along with a range of supporting information. While comment is not being sought from the public at this stage, you can obtain a copy of the full application by contacting the OGTR. Please quote the application number DIR 157. A summary of the application is available on the OGTR website (under '[What's New](#)') or by contacting the OGTR.