

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 162 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) wheat

What does this licence allow?

A licence has been issued to CSIRO to grow bread wheat and durum wheat plants that have been genetically modified to improve their resistance to rust disease. Rust diseases, including stem rust, leaf rust and stripe rust, can reduce the yield and quality of wheat crops. The trial can take place for 5 years, in the ACT and the Hilltops Council area in NSW. It is a small trial, with a maximum area of 1 ha in each growing season.

How have the GM wheat plants been modified?

The GM wheat plants may contain either a single introduced disease resistance gene or combinations of up to eight introduced genes for disease resistance. Some of the genes provide enhanced resistance to stem rust and some confer enhanced resistance to a combination of three rust diseases and powdery mildew. These are important diseases of wheat. The genes come from rye or bread wheat, or from other plants closely related to wheat.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial is to assess the performance of the GM wheat plants under field conditions. This assessment would include factors such as how well the GM wheat plants resist rust disease, as well as important agricultural characteristics such as plant growth and grain yield. The GM wheat grown in this field trial cannot 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, the applicant must fulfil a range of licence conditions that control when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial and put restrictions on any wheat leaving the trial site. For example, there are conditions to minimise spread of the GM wheat and its genes from the trial site, to securely transport and store the GM wheat, and to inspect the site at the end of the trial to check that all GM plants are 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 162](#) page of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the finalised RARMP, a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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