Questions & Answers on licence application DIR 164 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) canola

What is this application for?

Monsanto Australia Limited is requesting a licence to grow canola plants that have been genetically modified for herbicide tolerance. If approved, the proposed trial would take place between January 2020 and January 2024 in sites to be selected from 140 possible local government areas in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. The proposal is to plant up to 15 sites with a maximum combined area of 30 ha per year in 2020, increasing to 20 sites with a maximum combined area of 100 ha in 2023.

How has the GM canola been modified?

The dicamba-tolerant canola line proposed for release contains a gene from a soil bacterium that will confer tolerance to dicamba herbicide. This canola line may also be crossed with a commercially approved GM canola, which contains an introduced gene for tolerance to glyphosate herbicides. This will produce GM canola with tolerance to both dicamba and glyphosate herbicides.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The trial is to assess the performance of the GM canola under field conditions in all canola growing areas of Australia. 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?

A consultation Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) has been prepared for this application. This assessment concluded that the field trial poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, as this is a field trial, a range of licence conditions have been drafted that the applicant would have to fulfil. These conditions would limit the size, locations and duration of the trial and impose restrictions on any canola leaving the trial site. 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. This RARMP 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 for application DIR 164. 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 comments would be appreciated on any risks to the health and safety of people or to the environment from the proposed release. Please note that the consultation period closes on **22 October 2018** and written submissions are required by that date.

What are the next steps in the evaluation process?

The RARMP will be finalised, taking into account submissions received about the protection of people or the environment. The RARMP will then be used by the Regulator to decide whether or not to issue a licence for the trial.

The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

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

OGTR Website