

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 147 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) cotton

What does this licence allow?

Monsanto Australia Ltd has received approval from the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) to trial, under limited and controlled conditions, cotton plants that have been genetically modified for insect resistance and herbicide tolerance. The trial is permitted to take place between March 2017 and July 2021 in cotton growing areas of Australia on up to 50 sites per year with a maximum combined area of 50 ha in 2017, 100 ha in 2018, and 250 ha per year in 2019 and 2020. The maximum planting size of individual trial sites is 2 ha in 2017, 10 ha in 2018, and 50 ha per year in 2019 and 2020. Sites are to be selected from a number of local government areas in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

How have the GM cottons been modified?

The GM cottons permitted for release contain an inserted gene for protection against certain bugs, aphids and thrips that are insect pests of cotton. Combinations of this GM cotton with certain previously authorised insect resistant and/or herbicide tolerant cottons are also permitted for release. Some of the GM cottons may also contain marker genes, which were used to select GM plants during initial development in the laboratory.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the field trial is to assess the agronomic performance and pest resistance of the GM cottons under field conditions and to develop the GM cottons and produce seed for future releases, subject to further regulatory approvals. The GM cotton is not be permitted to enter human food or animal feed.

What controls are imposed on this release?

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for this application concluded that the proposed release poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, a range of licence conditions will limit the size, location and duration of the release, as well as restrict the spread and persistence of the GM cottons and the introduced genetic material. These include conditions that provide for secure transport and storage of the GM plant materials, restricting pollen flow to other cotton crops, and monitoring each release site for at least 12 months after final harvest, during which time any cotton plants found must be destroyed. A full list of the control measures is detailed in the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the [DIR 147 page](#) of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1 800 181 030. These documents include the finalised RARMP, a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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