

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 165 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) wheat

What does this licence allow?

A licence has been issued to the University of Melbourne to grow wheat plants that have been genetically modified for altered iron uptake, transport and bioavailability. The field trial can take place between April 2019 and December 2023 at sites in the wheat belt in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. In the first year, the field trial can be conducted at up to two trial sites, with a maximum combined area of 4 ha. In the remaining four years, the field trial can be conducted at up to 10 trial sites per year, with a maximum combined area of 20 ha per year.

How has the GM wheat been modified?

The GM wheat contains introduced genes derived from wheat, rice and other plants. The introduced genes have roles in increasing iron uptake from the soil to roots, enhancing iron transport from roots to the rest of the plant, increasing iron storage levels in grain and improving iron bioavailability when grain is consumed. The overall goal is to produce GM wheat with high iron levels in its grain.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The aim of the field trial is to gather research and regulatory data under field conditions. The GM wheat grown in the field trial will not 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 University of Melbourne must comply with a range of licence conditions that restrict when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial, and stop GM wheat from spreading outside the trial sites. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other wheat crops, to securely transport and store the GM wheat, and to inspect the sites 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 165](#) 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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