



April 2008

FACT SHEET

GMOs approved for commercial release in Australia: GM Canola

Dealings with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are regulated under the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (the Act). The intentional release of a GMO into the Australian environment must be licensed by the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator), and can only be licensed if risks can be managed so as to protect the health and safety of people and the environment.

GM canola varieties approved for commercial release in 2003

In 2003 the Regulator issued two licences for the commercial release of GM canola:

- Roundup Ready[®] canola: licence DIR 020/2002 to Monsanto Australia Ltd
- InVigor[®] canola: licence DIR 021/2002 to Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd

Roundup Ready[®] canola has been genetically modified to be tolerant to the herbicide glyphosate. InVigor[®] canola has been genetically modified to contain two new characteristics – a hybrid breeding system and tolerance to the herbicide glufosinate ammonium.

On the basis of the comprehensive Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plans (RARMPs) prepared in response to each application, the Regulator concluded that Roundup Ready[®] canola and InVigor[®] canola are as safe for human health and the environment as conventional canola. The RARMPs are publicly available through the Record of GMO and GM Product dealings (the GMO Record) on the Office of the Gene Technology (OGTR) website or by contacting the Office (see contact details below).

Other regulatory approvals

The use of food derived from these GM canola varieties has been approved by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Details on the assessment and regulation of GM foods is available from FSANZ (www.foodstandards.gov.au or by telephone on 02 6271 2222).

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) also registered proprietary herbicides Roundup Ready[®] and Liberty[®] for use on Roundup Ready[®] canola and InVigor[®] canola, respectively. The issue of herbicide resistance management was considered by the APVMA in registration of these products. The APVMA applied registration conditions to provide for responsible use of the herbicides and to minimise the potential for the development of herbicide resistance.

The Regulator's assessments remain current

The Regulator has the ability to gather and assess new information pertaining to current GMO licences. The Regulator is empowered to vary, suspend or cancel licences in order to be satisfied that risks are managed to protect the health and safety of people and the environment.

No information has arisen, either domestically or internationally, to indicate the commercial GM canola licences issued in 2003 should be varied, suspended or cancelled. Roundup Ready[®] canola and InVigor[®] canola are as safe for human health and the environment as conventional canola.

Oversight of the release of GM canola

At the time of issuing licences DIR 020/2001 and DIR 021/2002, the Regulator stated her intention to monitor the progress of the commercial releases.

The Regulator's post release review (PRR) framework provides for ongoing oversight of general/commercial releases of GM crops in Australia. Licence conditions may be imposed that enable the Regulator to seek information from licence holders. These may require the licence holder to supply, or enable the Regulator to collect, specific information on the progress of the release. The PRR framework also includes the review of RARMPs at an appropriate time after issuing of a licence.

State and Territory Moratoria

Following the Regulator's approval of GM canola on human health and environmental safety grounds, all jurisdictions except Queensland and the Northern Territory enacted legislation to delay the commercial release of GM crops, including GM canola, until marketability, agricultural trade and segregation issues were better understood.

Some States have recently reviewed their GM crop legislation:

- The Victorian Government allowed its moratorium order on commercial production of GM canola to lapse on 29 February 2008.
- The New South Wales Government has amended its moratorium to provide for the case-by-case approval of commercial cultivation of GM food crops, subject to advice from an expert committee on the relevant industry's capacity to meet specified trade and marketing criteria. On 14 March 2008 the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Energy, Mineral Resources and State Development approved GM canola in that State.
- The South Australian Government has decided to extend its moratorium.

It is important to note that the moratoria do not relate to protection of human health or the environment and are a matter for State and Territory governments, not the Regulator. Further information should be obtained from the relevant State or Territory.