



PRODUCT REFERENCE

Genetically Modified (GM) commodities

Genetically modified (GM) commodities are those in which the DNA has been changed using genetic engineering techniques. In many cases the aim is to introduce a new trait to the organism which does not occur naturally. Examples include resistance to pests, diseases, or environmental conditions, resistance to herbicides or insecticides, novel traits such as flower or eye colour, enhanced longevity, or the production of a certain nutrient or pharmaceutical agent.

In Australia, all dealings with live and viable Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), including their import, are illegal unless authorised under the Gene Technology Act 2000. When a dealing has been authorised, the product also requires an import permit from the department to allow its entry into Australian Territory. GM products that are imported require an assessment by the department to ensure that any genetic modifications which may increase the biosecurity risk of the commodity can be mitigated to meet Australia's appropriate level of protection, as defined in the Biosecurity Act 2015.

Authorisation of research involving GM material is provided by the Department of Health, Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR). There are several OGTR categories of authorisation in which GM material may be approved, dependent on the level of risk associated to the material and the modification. Authorisations for plant and plant related research fall into one of the following categories:

1. A Notifiable Low Risk Dealing (NLRD) for specified research described in the Gene Technology Regulations 2001. A list of these dealings is publically available on the OGTR website.
2. A licence for dealings involving intentional release of a GMO into the environment (DIR licence)
3. An IBC dealing

An IBC dealing is not a direct OGTR authorisation for the GM dealing. The OGTR gives approval for IBCs to assess low risk dealing proposals according to strict guidelines and legislative requirements. These committees then register the work with OGTR at the end of each financial year. The time delay between IBC approval and an NLRD number being listed on the OGTR website may be up to 15 months. IBC record of assessment approvals cannot be verified via the OGTR website. If an importer has a dealing approved by the IBC which has not yet been publicly listed as an NLRD on the OGTR website, the department will require a letter of approval which has been signed by the head of the IBC committee detailing the nature of the GMO and intended research.

For further information regarding this process see the process flow on the OGTR website:
<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/internet/ogtr/publishing.nsf/Content/nldrclass->

For further information regarding GMOs and the OGTR please see the OGTR website:
<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/>