



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELEASES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Advice on an application for deliberate release of a GMO for research and development purposes

Applicant: BASF Plant Science GmbH

Application: For a five year programme of work to release potato lines genetically modified for resistance to *Phytophthora infestans*

Ref: ¹07/R42/01

Date: 25 April 2007

Advice of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment to the Secretary of State under section 124 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

ACRE is satisfied that all appropriate measures have been taken to avoid adverse effects on human health and the environment from the proposed release and sees no reason for the release not to proceed on the following conditions. The holder of the consent shall:

1. in the two years following harvest of the GM potato tubers leave the area of release fallow and not plough but use only shallow tillage as required.
2. treat volunteers growing from true seed and groundkeepers in the fallow years with an application of glyphosate herbicide or hand pull potato plants prior to flowering. In subsequent years the appropriate herbicides should be used to control potato plants growing from true seed and from groundkeepers prior to flowering. Alternatively, plants growing from groundkeepers may be hand pulled.
3. notify the following information at the times shown:

the effects of the release as authorised by the consent, for the assessment of any risks there are of damage to human health and the environment from the genetically modified organisms concerned. This should be in the form of reports submitted:

- either one month after the date of termination² of each release in the programme of work or by 30 November in the year each trial was terminated whichever is the sooner;

¹Application reference 07/R42/1 dated 19 February 2007 taking into account all information and amendments in the applicant's communications received 27 February 2007.

² For the purposes of this consent 'termination' occurs when the tubers resulting from the seed potatoes are harvested or otherwise removed from the environment. The latter may include, but is not limited to, the removal of plant material following vandalism.

- annually on the anniversary of the date of the termination of the release or by 30 November, whichever is the sooner to cover post-trial monitoring for;
 - assessment of the effectiveness of measures to control groundkeepers and volunteers, and
 - the re-evaluation of the post trial monitoring requirements
- 4. report and control all groundkeepers and volunteers until a period of two years when no groundkeepers or volunteers are observed has elapsed.
- 5. ensure that during any post-trial monitoring period remaining after the fallow period that a crop in which groundkeepers and volunteers may be easily identified and controlled is cultivated on the release site.
- 6. ensure that any potato crop harvested from the release site in subsequent years must comply with the current legislation regarding traceability and labelling of GM products and measures must be taken to ensure that unauthorised GM potatoes are not placed on the market as a result of Part B releases under this consent.

Comment

ACRE considered the risks to human health and the environment posed by the proposed release of potatoes genetically modified for resistance to *Phytophthora infestans*. The Committee has previously commented on the environmental risk assessment of the release of these GM potato lines at other sites³.

Key characteristics of this release for risk assessment are that :-

- i) The trial will be on a relatively small scale. This application is to release a total of 225,000 GM potatoes over a 5 year period. The applicant has proposed that the GM potato plants will occupy no more than 1 hectare in an experimental plot of less than 2 hectares in each year of the trial.
- ii) The GM potatoes produced as a result of this release will not be put into the human food chain or fed to livestock.

In reaching its view on the current application ACRE considered the new information on the location of the release site, the size of the release and the post-harvest disposal of the tubers provided by BASF Plant Sciences GmbH.

The Committee is satisfied that the environmental risk assessment provided for the previous release sites also applies at the new site in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The Committee is therefore content for consent to be granted to BASF, provided the conditions issued under consent 06/R42/01 apply.

³ See comments made on ACRE's advice on application 06/R42/01;
http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/acre/advice/pdf/acre_advice75.pdf

Items arising from public representations

A total of 36 public representations were made during the consultation period (one of these was in the form of a petition signed by more than 600 people), ACRE considered comments relating to separation distances, survival of potato tubers and seed and cross pollination.

The Committee considers that other issues raised in these representations did not affect the risk assessment given the scale of the release and the fact that tubers from this release were not destined for the food chain of humans or livestock.

ACRE considers that the site specific issues raised during the consultation, including the proximity of the trial to borage fields, honey-bee hives and public footpaths do not pose a risk to human health or the environment.

ACRE was content that all issues raised had been considered thoroughly during the Committee's assessment of the dossier submitted under application B/06/R42/01 and in subsequent discussions on 22 February. ACRE was satisfied that no new issues affecting the impact of the release on the environment or human health had been raised from the public with respect to this application.