

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: May 15, 2024

Report Number: AS2024-0011

Report Name: Australia Approves Commercialization of Genetically Engineered Banana

Country: Australia

Post: Canberra

Report Category: Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies

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Report Highlights:

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has approved a Queensland University of Technology (QUT) application to permit food derived from a banana line genetically engineered (GE) for resistance to Panama disease. The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) in Australia issued a license permitting the commercial growth of a genetically engineered (GE) banana (QCAV-4). This ruling is the first GE fruit assessed and approved by FSANZ.

Overview

In February 2024, The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) in Australia issued a license permitting the commercialization of a genetically engineered (GE) banana. This license allows Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to commercially cultivate GE banana plants modified for resistance to Fusarium wilt tropical race 4 (TR4), a fungal disease that is also known as Panama disease.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) concluded the GE banana is just as safe and nutritious as a conventional banana. This ruling is the first GE fruit assessed and approved by FSANZ and the first GE banana approved globally.

QUT scientists created the GE banana called QCAV-4 by adding a gene from a wild banana into a Cavendish banana, resulting in a banana highly resistant to Panama Disease (TR4).

The OGTR announced that the GE banana is suitable for commercial cultivation across several areas in Australia, mainly in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory. QUT has advised that there are no immediate plans to commercialize the GE banana in Australia because Panama disease is absent. The QUT teams plans to use QCAV-4 as a ‘safety net’ if the devastating Panama Disease starts to spread throughout Australia.

On February 16, 2024, FSANZ notified the [Australian and New Zealand food ministers](#) of the decision to approve the QUT application. The food ministers had 60 days to consider the approval and request a review. Since no review was requested, the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code was amended to permit the sale and use of food derived from the QCAV-4 banana in April 2024.

More information on the commercial release application (DIR-199), can be found on the [OGTR website](#).

More information on the food standards code can be found on the [FSANZ website](#).

Attachments:

No Attachments.