

APHA Genetic Modification Inspectorate

Growing season field inspection report: consent 24/R57/01 (2025 release)

A report of a field inspection visit to an experimental genetically modified (GM) crop trial to assess compliance with Part VI of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 2002.

GMO consent details

Consent reference: 24/R57/01 ('Part B' consent)

Consent holder: University of Oxford

Crop type: Spring wheat (*Triticum aestivum*)

Site details: Histon, Cambridgeshire

OS Reference: TL 426 619

Details of the GMO

The genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are wheat *Triticum aestivum* var. 'Fielder' plants, that have been genetically modified to produce altered levels of a key component (SP1) of the CHLORAD (chloroplast-associated protein degradation) regulatory system of plastid protein import. The altered levels of SP1 leads to a functional stay-green phenotype, associated with prolonged photosynthetic activity and improved crop-yield.

Purpose of the release:

To investigate the agronomic performance of wheat lines that have been gene edited with respect to elements of the CHLORAD system in order to assess this technology as a means to improve yields and stress tolerance.

Site inspection details

Inspection date: 17 July 2025

Site reference: UoO-24/R57/01-SITE03-2025-INSP_01.

Staff seen: NIAB Trial Lead

Inspection details

The Genetic Modification Inspectorate carried out an inspection of this 2025-sown research trial of GM wheat at the early dough stage (growth stage 83). The GMI reviewed the:

- methods employed to plant the GMOs
- procedures in place for management and monitoring of the release during the growing season
- Consent Holder's plans for harvest and disposal of plant material.

All were in accordance with the requirements specified in the consent document.

Checks were also made on the:

- measures in place to restrict human access to the site
- location, size and layout of the trial
- status of the 20-metre border

All of which were in accordance with the requirements specified in the consent document.

During the inspection, it was noted that the pollen barrier surrounding the trial was 40cm narrower than the minimum width of 2 metres on two sides as specified under Condition 4(2) of the consent. The GMI discussed this finding with the Defra Genetic Technologies Regulation and Policy Team. It was concluded that since a non-GM wheat trial was present in the same field as the GM trial, genetic crossing could have occurred; therefore, the non-GM wheat in the trial field should be disposed of post-harvest and not allowed to enter the food and/or feed chain.

Conclusions and actions

Report conclusions

The Genetic Modification Inspectorate is content that, other than the width of the pollen barrier, the release is consistent with the conditions and limitations specified in the consent. No risks to human health or the environment, posed by the genetically modified organism, were identified.

Action required or taken: The GMI notified the Defra Genetic Technologies Regulation and Policy Team of the narrower-than-specified pollen barrier. The Policy Team recommended all non-GM wheat crops in the same field as the GM wheat trial that were not released under consent 24/R57/01 be destroyed post-harvest and not allowed to enter the food and/or feed chain. The Policy Team also agreed that the Consent Holder should be reminded of their responsibility to adhere to the conditions and limitations specified in the consent document.

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22 July 2025