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Gene technology regulation in Australia: a framework for identifying, assessing and managing risks

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Summary This presentation on Australia's regulatory framework for gene technology, in the context of the session topic 'Biotechnology: the way forward?' introduces delegates to governmental and industry responsibilities in relation to the release of genetically modified crops into the Australian environment.

The presentation outlines a number of features of the gene technology regulatory scheme with particular emphasis on how the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) undertakes the scientific evaluation of risks that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) may pose to human health and safety and the environment. It will also explain why the evaluation and management of certain issues including economic impacts (e.g. marketability and agricultural trade) and alternative technologies are excluded from consideration. Risk management strategies to minimise the likelihood of identified hazards occurring, including research initiatives required, or sponsored by, the OGTR to inform risk management measures will also be discussed.

The governance framework established by the *Gene Technology Act* 2000 and the respective roles of the Gene Technology Regulator, expert advisory groups, State and Territory Governments, Australian Government agencies and authorities, and the involvement of the public in the evaluation of licence applications are explained.

Keywords Gene technology, regulation, GMO, risk assessment, risk management.