

African Centre for Biosafety
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THUMBS DOWN FOR GM MOSQUITOCIDE IN SA

The Executive Council acting under the Genetically Modified Organisms Act has rejected out of hand, an application by Biological Control Products SA (Pty) Ltd, to test in open water sources, a genetically modified mosquitocide. The mosquitocide has been genetically engineered to destroy mosquito larvae.

The GM mosquitocide is a recombinant filamentous, nitrogen-fixing cyanobacterium, *Anabaena* sp. Strain Pasture Culture Collection 7210, genetically engineered to express the cry4Aa, cry11Aa and p20 genes from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringeinis* subsp. *israelensis* (Bti). The GM mosquitocide also contains nptII, which confers resistance to neomycin. The transformation appears to have been done at the Ben Gurion University in Israel.

The Executive Council found the application to have been fundamentally flawed because the intended release is a 'listed activity' in terms of Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations made in terms of the National Environmental Management Act. This means that the applicant is required to follow the procedures set out in the EIA regulations, including procedures relating to the possibility of conducting an environmental impact assessments and following procedures for proper public participation.

In addition, the Executive Council raised several biosafety concerns relating to non-target organisms and the inadequacy of the containment measures proposed by the applicant. It also found the safety assessment data by the applicant to be woefully inadequate.

If the application had been successful, the mosquitocide would have been released in water bodies in Bushbuckride, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Civil society groups are urged to engage with any fresh application submitted by Biological Controls Product to test the system and demand that a full EIA be conducted. A first for GMOs! in South Africa.