

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 08459 335577
Email helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.defra.gov.uk



Dr Helen Wallace
Director, GeneWatch UK
60 Lightwood Road
Buxton
Derbyshire
SK17 7BB

Our ref: PO 224553

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From Lord Henley
Parliamentary Under Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Dr Helen Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thank you for your letter of 19 February to the Secretary of State about the export of GM mosquito eggs by Oxitec, which you believe may not be compliant with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Officials in Defra have been in contact with Oxitec regarding the procedures it has in place for the export of GM organisms to non-EU countries. The company has sent relevant documentation to Defra (as the UK competent authority) and the European Commission in respect of the export to the Cayman Islands, albeit not until sometime after this had first taken place. We believe the key point here is that Oxitec had been liaising closely with the Cayman Island authorities and had obtained their permission before proceeding with the shipment of the eggs. The majority of the exports that Oxitec have made have been for Contained Use purposes, and are therefore not covered by the requirements under the Cartagena Protocol for Advanced Informed Agreement.

With regard to the export to Brazil, we were informed subsequent to the Parliamentary Question you refer to that Oxitec had received a request from the Brazilian authorities to provide further mosquito eggs for the purpose of a deliberate release into the environment, as they did not have a big enough contained population of their own to carry out a release trial. Oxitec has provided the relevant information to the UK Competent Authority and to the Commission as required for this shipment.