

National Code of Practice and Quality Trademark for Legume Microbial Inoculant Products used in Australian Crops and Pastures

A new Code of Practice has been prepared by the Australian Inoculants Research Group (AIRG) of I&I NSW's Primary Industries division in collaboration with Sydney University, Becker Underwood Pty Ltd., New Edge Microbials Pty Ltd., Novozymes Biologicals Ltd. with contributions from SARDI, CRS (Murdoch University), DPI Victoria, and the GRDC

Why a Code of Practice?

The Code was designed to establish a set of protocols and testing standards for assessing legume inoculant products for quality. Inoculants manufactured and compliant under the Code and identified with a quality trademark will help consumers identify those inoculants that have been independently tested in an ISO9001:2008 certified laboratory and are of highest quality, thus promoting consumer confidence and consumer demand for such inoculants in preference to other non-regulated products.



The Code operates for both the inoculant manufacturer and the independent quality testing laboratory. Through its 50-year history under various names, AIRG's function and *modus operandi* of being the independent quality testing (control and licensing) authority continues, coupled with R&D driven by farmer and industry demands. AIRG is deemed by the National Rhizobiology Program (NRP) as the conduit through which R&D outputs flow to industry, particularly in relation to rhizobial strain selection and recommendation for the various important legume crops and pastures in Australia.

NSW I&I and its collaborators with the participating inoculant manufacturers are committed to ensuring that Australian farmers have access to high quality legume inoculants. Only when a product is compliant with the Code, can the manufacturer of the legume inoculant product display the registered (pending) quality trademark Logo issued through AIRG.

What is the Code of Practice?

The Code is an I&I NSW document and came into effect from July 2010. It forms part of new Services Agreement contracts between I&I NSW and participating legume inoculant manufacturers. Signatories to the Code have obligations in the way a legume inoculant batch is manufactured, handled and tested for compliance at the point of manufacture and at retail outlets.

Obligations under the Code include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Labelling requirements, manufacturers will label their products in the following way:
 - I. The plant host for which the product (inoculant) should be used
 - II. Batch number
 - III. Product shelf life or expiry date
 - IV. Conditions of storage
 - V. Method of application to seed or soil of the product (inoculant)
 - VI. The guaranteed minimum number of micro-organisms per unit of product at point-of-sale (minimum standards apply for legume inoculants)
- ✓ Should the inoculant contain non-rhizobial PGP microorganisms, the statement in VI above refers only to the guaranteed minimum number of rhizobia micro-organisms,.

- ✓ AIRG will supply on an annual basis to the manufacturer authenticated NRP /AIRG recommended rhizobial strains for Australia to be used to manufacture inoculants for the various legume groups.
- ✓ AIRG will undertake testing at point of manufacture for quality, based on protocols for assessing rhizobial population in the inoculant, the correct strain and effectiveness of the rhizobial strain to fix atmospheric nitrogen in the plant. These are all checked prior to sale.