

APPPC – Australian country report 2015

Australian Government Department of Agriculture

1 Executive summary

In 2015, the Australian Government appointed a new head of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Daryl Quinlivan.

In the department in 2014, Dr Kim Ritman was appointed as the new Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer.

The name *Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry* (DAFF) is no longer used and the Department's name has been shortened to the *Department of Agriculture*.

Australia's newly approved Biosecurity Act 2015 will commence on 16 June 2016, replacing the Quarantine Act 1908. Until commencement of the new legislation, the Quarantine Act 1908 remains the primary piece of biosecurity legislation in Australia.

Australia has developed a new import regulation system called BICON to replace ICON, which is Australia's existing import conditions and permit application system. BICON will make it easier for clients to find information about Australia's import conditions and permits and is due to be launched in late 2015.

A new post entry quarantine facility is being built in southern Australia, near Melbourne airport. All other facilities will close when it becomes operational and it is expected to commence operations in late 2015. Australia is reviewing quarantine conditions for imported seed, following incursions from several seed transmitted pathogens.

Surveillance activities in Australia are described and information provided on some native and invasive weed species. Pest management is outlined, explaining the management and funding of eradication programs, as well as the agreed technical response plan. Where eradication programs are not considered feasible, transition to management programs are implemented and examples are provided for some of these programs.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has built and delivered new online services and a new website. This means that applications for approval and registration of chemicals and payments of fees and levies can now be done through an integrated and secure online system.

2 General information

In 2015, the Australian Government appointed a new head of the Department of Agriculture, Mr Daryl Quinlivan .

In the department in 2014, Dr Kim Ritman was appointed as the new Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer. Dr Ritman is Australia's official contact point to the International Plant Protection Convention but also continues in his role as Chief Scientist of the department.

The name *Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry* (DAFF) is no longer used and the Department's name has been shortened to the *Department of Agriculture*. As a result of the change, all email addresses for the department have changed from @daff.gov.au to @agriculture.gov.au. Emails sent to the old address are not forwarded.

The Biosecurity Bill 2014 and supporting legislation received royal assent from the Governor-General on 16 June 2015 and has now become the Biosecurity Act 2015.

The new Biosecurity Act will commence on 16 June 2016, 12 months after royal assent, replacing the Quarantine Act 1908. Until commencement of the new legislation, the Quarantine Act 1908 remains the primary piece of biosecurity legislation in Australia.

The 12 month delay is to ensure clients, staff and stakeholders understand their rights and responsibilities under the new Biosecurity Act and there is a smooth transition to the new regulatory arrangements. The Act can be found here: <https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2015A00061>

The new legislation will:

- Provide government with additional options to manage biosecurity threats including human health risks.
- Support rapid response capability for onshore incursions and emergencies.
- Recognise regional differences in pest status in Australia with regard to import regulation.
- New powers to consider previous non compliant behaviour of individuals before issuing import permits.

The Biosecurity Import Conditions (BICON) system is the new import regulation system that is being built to replace ICON, Australia's existing import conditions and permit application system. BICON will make it easier for clients to find information about Australia's import conditions and permits.

Improvements to the new system include:

- improved decision support for importers
- a better search facility
- clearly written import conditions
- onshore documentation requirements
- an integrated permit application process
- up-front permit fee information and online payment options
- the ability to track permit applications.

The anticipated launch of BICON will be in the second half of 2015. Established users of ICON (including overseas exporters and certifying organisations) will be notified well in advance of the transition to BICON.

3 Phytosanitary matters (plant quarantine)

The Department is building a new, purpose-built post entry quarantine (PEQ) facility, near Melbourne airport in Victoria. It is expected that it will be fully operational in late 2015 and once operating all existing other PEQ facilities will be closed.

Fruit/vegetable seed - Issue: In recent years Australia has had several outbreaks of seed transmitted diseases that have been traced to imported seed. In these cases, the import conditions for the host commodity seed were not adequate to mitigate the risk. Australia has also become aware of newly discovered seed transmitted diseases globally.

Regulatory change: Australia has implemented emergency measures for tomato, capsicum, carrot and some cucurbit seed imports, requiring molecular testing to certify seed is free from seed transmitted pathogens of quarantine concern.

4 Surveillance, pest outbreaks and invasive species management

Surveillance is undertaken by the Department, state and territory government agencies and industries, using a mix of targeted (specific) and general surveillance programs. There are several national programs supported by the Australian Government, such as the national exotic fruit fly trapping program at ports of entry and in the Torres Strait; and the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy pest and disease surveys of a broad range of tropical horticultural and agricultural species in northern Australia. General surveillance works through raising awareness of specific pest to growers and the public and relying on them reporting any detection.

Established surveillance programs exist for native locust – Australian plague locust (*Chortoicetes terminifera*), spur-throated locust (*Austracris guttulosa*) and migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*), with controls by the relevant states and territories. Cross-border monitoring and controls are carried out by the Australian Plague Locust Commission, funded by the affected states and the Australian Government.

The control of invasive weed species are estimated to cost over AUD4 billion annually. The Australian Government and state and territory governments manage and coordinate national cost-shared invasive weed eradication programs. Currently targeted are Koster's curse (*Clidemia hirta*), *Limnocharis flava*, *Mikania micrantha* and *Miconia clavescens*, *M. racemosa* and *M. nervosa*.

5 Pest management

The Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed covers the management and funding of eradication responses to designated emergency plant pests. It is a formal, legally binding agreement between the industry association, the Australian Government, all state and territory governments and industries that have signed onto it. Government and industry parties share the costs of eradicating emergency plant pests based on an assessment of the relative private and public benefits of eradication. The Deed specifies parties' roles in decision-making and operational processes and provides a rapid and effective response, while giving certainty to management and funding arrangements.

PlantPLAN is the agreed technical response plan used by governments and industries in responding to a pest incident. It provides nationally consistent guidelines for response procedures under the Deed. A review of PlantPLAN commenced in 2012 to improve alignment with existing nationally endorsed emergency management procedures. In recent eradication responses:

- Chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) was first detected in chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees in Australia (Victoria) on 8 September 2010. The incursion is under an active eradication response which is cost shared under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) by Australian governments and industry. Proof of freedom of Chestnut blight is expected in 2017.
- Giant pine scale, (*Marchalina hellenica*) has been detected in pine trees in suburbs east of Melbourne and in Adelaide (Australia). The pest is an insect that lives by sucking the sap of hosts including pine trees. The insect produces white, waxy, cotton-like secretions that are visible on infected trees. A national cost shared response under the EPPRD for eradication of this scale species was initiated by Australian governments and industry. Confirmation of successful eradication and proof of freedom of this exotic pest is expected in late 2017.
- Banana Freckle (caused by the fungus *Phyllosticta cavendishii*) was detected for the first time on Cavendish bananas in Darwin, Northern Territory in mid-July 2013. Banana Freckle is a disease of banana leaves and fruit. Fruit that has been affected by the disease is safe to eat; but blemishes on the skin of the fruit reduce saleability. A National Banana Freckle Eradication Program, initiated under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, has been underway since October 2013. Proof of freedom of Banana Freckle is expected in July 2017.

- Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA, *Solenopsis invicta*) is a highly invasive pest with a range of impacts on human health, agricultural production, the natural environment and human infrastructure. There are currently three nationally cost-shared responses underway for the eradication of RIFA. The South-east Queensland RIFA eradication program started in 2001, prior to the implementation of the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA); RIFA was detected in Yarwun, Queensland in 2013 and in Port Botany, New South Wales in November 2014 and both these incursions have separate Response Plans under the NEBRA.

Over 90 contingency plans with background information on specific exotic pests have been developed by industry and government to enable the development of effective response plans in the event of an incursion.

As not all incursions can be eradicated, there has been recognition that there is need for nationally agreed and consistent arrangements to be put in place to deal with these incursions. This has resulted in the development of Transition to Management Guidelines. These guidelines are being used, with Government funding support, to deal with pests that cannot be eradicated – Asian honey bee, myrtle rust and branched broomrape *Philipanche ramosa* (formerly *Orobanche ramosa*).

Biological control options are implemented if trials indicate that the agent does not pose a risk to any non-target plant species. In 2014, the tortricid moth *Cydia succedana* was approved for release for the biological control of gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and the rust fungus *Baeodromus eupatorii* was approved for release for the biological control of crofton weed (*Ageratina adenophora*).

6 Pesticide management

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the independent statutory authority responsible for the assessment, registration and regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals (generally referred to as pesticides and veterinary medicines) in Australia. APVMA administer and manage the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, which sets out the regulatory framework for managing these chemicals in Australia.

More than 11 000 pesticide or veterinary medicine products are registered in Australia. Australia's system for managing pesticides and veterinary medicines is a risk management system that provides a systematic, scientific, evidence-based approach to decision-making and operations.

APVMA evaluate the safety and performance of chemicals intended for sale in Australia to ensure that the health and safety of people, animals, crops and the environment are protected. Also, registered products must not unduly jeopardise Australia's trade with other countries.

APVMA has built and delivered new online services and a new website. This means that applications for approval and registration of chemicals and payments of fees and levies can now be done through an integrated and secure online system. APVMA's new case management system delivers more efficient management of both applications and enquiries.

APVMA have conducted the following major reviews:

Fenthion – Following a review, most products containing the chemical fenthion are now cancelled for use in Australia. A final report outlines the reasons for the final decision bringing together the outcomes of all risk assessments done to date, including toxicology, residues in food, worker exposure and environmental effects.

All horticultural uses except for post-harvest dipping of tropical and subtropical inedible peel fruits are now cancelled. Products used to control cattle lice and other pest control and home garden

products are also cancelled. The APVMA is allowing a phase-out period of 12 months to enable use of cancelled products. For more information: <http://apvma.gov.au/node/12541>

Dimethoate – The use of Dimethoate in Australia is suspended for the following uses:

- on certain horticultural crops
- on all food producing plants in the home garden

This suspension is in force whilst APVMA conduct further assessments on the chemical. For more information: <http://apvma.gov.au/node/12496>