

Email to:

Mr Roger Beale

Chairman

Quarantine and Biosecurity Review

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858

CANBERRA ACT 2601

(Official submission period has closed – due to report to the Australian Government 30 September 2008)

As I explained in our telco we have just been informed that the department of Agriculture and Food in WA are going to close the AQUIS facility. In discussions on this we have also just learnt that a review is currently being undertaken of Quarantine and Biosecurity. I hope that you can forward this email to the appropriate people for consideration in the review despite the deadline for submissions closing.

Our company is involved in the horticultural and viticultural industries in WA and Victoria with the majority of our operations in WA. We operate a little over 1000 ha of wine grapes, 220 ha of avocados and have the main winegrape nursery in WA. The wine industry in WA and Australia for that matter currently does not have the quality genetic material that it needs to compete effectively as it should in the international fine wine market. We have a program of identifying superior genetics (as does Yalumba Nurseries in SA) and importing them into WA. This includes material predominantly from overseas but also some from the E states generally that other nurseries have recently imported.

With wine grapes the material is imported into quarantine as dormant cuttings and methyl bromide and also heat treated. The quality of the material and minimising the time in transit are critical to the success of the dormant cuttings being able to be successfully propagated (strike to form roots and leaves) as the heat treatment and methyl bromide are pretty severe on them. We have established a good working relationship with the WA AQUIS people at the Department of Agriculture and Food and are now getting reasonable success with imported material surviving.

Last week we were informed that the WA AQUIS facility would be closing because the WA Department of Agriculture and Food who operate the facility on behalf of AQUIS are losing around \$50K per annum. I contacted Rob Delane, Deputy Director General (Biosecurity & Research), Department of Agriculture and Food in WA. Rob informs me as the following extract from his email says:

"I am awaiting a flight to Brisbane and do not have \$\$ numbers with me but:

- Anti-smuggling subsidy was established about 10 years ago - \$1m – but no increase since
- I think our post-entry quarantine (PEQ) facility received only \$9,500 last year (down about \$40,000 on past years)
- Most subsidy goes to Eastern Creek and Knoxfield – also largest volume of work
- DAFWA currently provides substantial subsidy to both international (AQIS) and interstate PEQ services with the 80:20 rule broadly applying to the customer base "

On the surface it looks as though WA are getting a very small share of the anti smuggling subsidy (ie <1%!)). Could someone please explain why WA appears to be unfairly disadvantaged as regards the split of funding..

As regards grapevine material if the WA AQUIS facility closes then we will have to import into the

E States produce dormant cuttings and then import the dormant cuttings into the WAQUIS (WA quarantine) This means that instead of 2-2.5 years of quarantine we would be up for the 2 – 2.5 plus time to produce the dormant cuttings (say 0.5 - 1 year) and then the WAQUIS process say 1 year taking the total time out to around 4.5-5 years. This is not a satisfactory situation and will undoubtedly lead some to bypass the system which will jeopardise our industry.

I would suggest that given WA is free from a number of pests and diseases that it would be logical to have AQUIS facilities in both the E States and WA rather than multiple facilities on the east coast. It is clear that if the facilities are removed from WA that industries in this state will be put at a disadvantage. Surely it would be good risk management policy to have facilities with a very wide geographic spread as well.

Regards

**Neil Delroy**

Director

Agribusiness Research and Management

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