



QUARANTINE AND BIOSECURITY REVIEW ISSUES PAPER

SUBMISSION

To

**Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Panel
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

Prepared by:-

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Background

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc) (WAFarmers) is WA's largest and most influential rural lobby and service organisation.

WAFarmers represents approximately 3,500 Western Australian farmers from a range of primary industries including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers and beekeepers.

It is estimated that collectively our members are major contributors to the \$5.9 billion gross value of production (2005/06 – ABS, WA Agri-Food Industry Outlook – December 2007) that agriculture in its various forms contributes to Western Australia's economy.

Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

Comment

WAFarmers welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the *Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Issues paper*.

WAFarmers members have regularly expressed concern at the perceived watering down of Australia's biosecurity and quarantine protection measures, the *appropriate level of protection* (ALOP) and its rights and obligations to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) via the *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures* (the SPS Agreement).

The policy of aiming to reduce risk to a very low level, but not to zero makes the process subject to the integrity of the lowest common denominator. An issue which WAFarmers is confident will be apparent as the current Equine Influenza (EI) Inquiry delivers its outcomes.

WAFarmers believes that the EI outbreak was a timely indicator of the shortfalls of the ALOP concept and given this belief is somewhat bemused that the Review will not be considering the level at which Australia has set its ALOP.

To this end it is noted that (24) *It is not clear whether Australian policy makers, administrators and the broader community have always had a clear or common interpretation of this qualitative concept*. This is the case within WAFarmers membership in regards to the ALOP along with Australia's WTO obligations.

That said, WAFarmers also recognises that effective implementation of the ALOP process can be hampered when systems and financial resources allocated to the ALOP fail due to government interference along with federal and state budget cuts.



Government intervention is just as important if not more important in assessing the reasons as to why systematic failure of ALOP occurs.

WAFarmers has reviewed the outcomes of the 1996 Nairn Review into Quarantine and the 1997 government response and notes that the greater majority of the Nairn reports were accepted by the government of the day. How successfully the recommendations have been implemented is difficult to assess from WAFarmers perspective.

Western Australia was fortunate in avoiding the impacts of the EI outbreak and has closely monitored processes in the eastern states as the outbreak was brought under control.

Findings and recommendations from the EI Inquiry and parallel Homeland and Border Security Review will be critical to the outcomes from the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review. These findings and recommendations should be broadly communicated and adopted by the respective agencies.

Given the current turmoil in the ranks of farmer representation at the national level, WAFarmers also seeks to have improved communication processes implemented to ensure that all farmer representative bodies are kept abreast of the review outcomes and changes as they are implemented.

The Biosecurity Australia Import Risk Analysis (IRA) process is not well understood in WA and an improved communication process, including, face to face briefings with industry representative bodies should be adopted.

WAFarmers looks forward to the opportunity of meeting with the Review Panel to discuss this submission in due course.

Conclusion

On the assumption that measures have already been taken to tighten biosecurity and quarantine arrangements since the EI outbreak, WAFarmers is supportive of the current biosecurity and quarantine arrangements pending the outcomes of these inquiries and implementation of recommendations aimed at tightening existing procedures.

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