

CENTURY ORCHARDS

Quarantine and Biosecurity Review
Mr Roger Beale AO
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Beale,

Protecting Australia's "First Line of Defence"

Australia is facing a ludicrous quarantine situation. Together with many Australian horticultural and agricultural industries, the Australian almond industry is critically reliant upon honeybees for pollination.

An incursion into Australia of a serious pest or disease affecting honeybees, such as *Varroa destructor*, will have a devastating impact with an estimated total economic impact of \$3.7 billion.

Such an incursion will necessitate long term quarantine response measures and consequent management costs, in addition to significantly increasing the difficulty and cost of bee hive management.

Australia is one of the last countries in the world yet to be affected by the *Varroa destructor*, a devastating mite that has recently spread throughout New Zealand. Recent experiences in the US and New Zealand have shown that once *Varroa* enters Australia, it is most likely that eradication and/or containment measures will have limited effect beyond slowing the spread of the pest due to ecology of the parasite and the social behaviour of bees.

Effective at-the-border surveillance measures are of critical importance to the honeybee industry, the broader agricultural and horticultural industries, and thereby the public in general.

A *Varroa mite* incursion into Australia will have a devastating direct impact across a broad range of industries including the honeybee industry, many horticultural and agricultural industries, in addition to significant indirect impacts across the community at large.

Government support is urgently requested for continued operation and funding support for this National surveillance program that essentially acts as Australia's "first line of defence".

There is strong argument for Government funding in order to ensure effective and efficient operation of this surveillance program, thereby protecting the viability of many Australian industries.

We strongly supports the request by Pollination Australia and the Almond Board of Australia for urgent action to address this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Ablett
Managing Director

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