

AgForce Queensland Industrial Union of Employers

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Independent Review Panel
Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity
Email: igabreview@agriculture.gov.au

Re: Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) Review

AgForce is the peak state farming organisation representing the majority of beef, sheep and wool, and grain producers in Queensland. The gross value of these agricultural commodities in Queensland for 2014/15 totalled \$6.3billion which included \$1.15billion for broadacre cereal, oilseed and pulse crops, \$5.14billion for slaughtered cattle and sheep and \$66million for wool¹. AgForce exists to ensure the long term growth, viability, competitiveness and profitability of these industries. Our members provide high-quality food and fibre products to Australian and overseas consumers, manage more than 50% of the Queensland landscape, and contribute significantly to the social fabric of rural and remote communities.

Biosecurity risks pose some of the greatest threats to the red meat and cropping industries. Queensland's reputation for disease-free production enables access to many export markets which is worth more than \$3billion annually. In the event of an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Australia, this could cripple the export beef industry and cost Australia between \$5.6 billion to \$51.8 billion over ten years² to eradicate. Crop diseases and weed seed contamination threaten the productivity and export trade for broadacre grain crops. For example, the recent isolated outbreak of red witchweed *Striga asiatica* on coastal Queensland needs to be successfully eradicated and not spread to inland grain growing areas, otherwise grain export trade could be severely affected. National biosecurity is paramount for Australia. Shared responsibilities between governments and agricultural industries can be improved by considering collective feedback to this IGAB Review.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics – Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced 2014-15
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7503.0>

² Buetre, B, Wicks, S, Kruger, H, Millist, N, Yainshet, A, Garner, G, Duncan, A, Abdalla, A, Trestrail, C, Hatt, M, Thompson, LJ & Symes, M 2013, *Potential socio-economic impacts of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Australia*, ABARES research report, Canberra, September. CC BY 3.0.
data.daff.gov.au/data/.../RR13.11PotSocEcolmpctOfFMD_v1.0.0.docx daff.gov.au/abares/publications.

AgForce offers the following feedback to specific questions posed in the IGAB Discussion Paper.

Ques	IGAB Review Question	Response
3	What practical improvements to the IGAB and/or structure would provide for an increased, but accountable role for industry & broader community?	<p>A partnership approach with IGAB that includes peak national bodies that address biosecurity risks such as Animal Health Australia, Plant Health Australia and National Farmers Federations.</p> <p>Biosecurity risks that fall outside or fall across sectoral areas need to be included. It is not clear if the current Biosecurity Sub-Committees consider biosecurity diseases and risks arising from the aquarium and plant nursery industries, direct internet purchases by individuals and zoonotic diseases.</p>
5	In order of importance, what do you see as the most significant current and future biosecurity risks and priorities for Australia and why?	<p>The most important national biosecurity priorities are:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevention and surveillance of biosecurity risks. 2. Rapid response to outbreaks of national consequence. 3. Imparting a biosecurity duty of care to everyone living in and visiting Australia. 4. Managing biosecurity risk associated with globalisation, rapid international travel and trade including protecting our northern borders. 5. Adequate resourcing and expertise in biosecurity identification and response across all industry, community and environmental sectors. 6. Spread of biosecurity risks changing due to climate variability (eg. pathogens spreading on cyclonic winds, flood events spreading weeds and pests, warming climate increasing the potential spread of diseases, pests and vectors). 7. Agroterrorism preparedness to prevent future terrorist attacks on Australian agriculture such as brucellosis, rabies and other zoonotic diseases, etc. <p>Why? Retain Australia's recognition and ability to produce and export safe food and fibre. The cost of prevention and rapid response is less than the cost of control of an established biosecurity risk.</p>
6	Are the components and functions of Australia's national biosecurity system consistently understood by all stakeholders? What could be done to improve this?	<p>Although commercial producers understand the importance of managing biosecurity risks, there is limited knowledge across many of the peri-urban /hobby growers and part-time small agricultural holdings. Coupled with this is the growing urban-rural divide where many urban community</p>

		<p>members are disconnected and do not understand agricultural biosecurity risks.</p> <p>Part of the solution lies in resourcing national media campaigns that highlight the risk and show graphic images of affected stock and crops and what culling may need to occur to control an outbreak. If graphic media images and social media can impact on live export trading, animal welfare, greyhound racing then a similar national marketing campaign can be used to call everyone to action to protect Australia from biosecurity risk.</p> <p>Another area of mixed views on biosecurity is the future development and use of Cape York, Queensland. Biosecurity surveillance is critical over this buffer area between high risk northern neighbouring islands and the rest of Queensland and Australia. The Australian Government and agricultural industries are keen to see this area developed for northern agriculture whereas the environmental movement, Queensland Labor Government and the national Labor Party consider this area is best managed as a protected estate/ World Heritage. Reduced biosecurity surveillance by local producers would be considered high risk.</p>
15	<p>What can be done to ensure an equitable level of investment from all stakeholders across Australia’s national biosecurity system, including from risk creators and risk beneficiaries?</p>	<p>The feasibility of a Biosecurity Levy capturing everyone (Australian residents and visitors) develops a sense of contribution and commitment. Can a small percentage of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) contribute towards national and state biosecurity?</p> <p>Recent biosecurity incursions affecting Queensland such as imported red fire ant, yellow crazy ants, myrtle rust and red witchweed affect many industries, environment and community and hence are difficult to reach agreement on commodity based cost-sharing. A GST-biosecurity levy would be a solution where everyone contributes, not just rate-payers or industry groups. A biosecurity ‘fighting fund’ could help resource rapid responses and create a culture of “see and respond” rather than hide any incursions and/or face significant financial losses due to property quarantine zones.</p>
18	<p>How can the capacity and capability of surveillance systems (including diagnostic systems) underpinning Australia’s national biosecurity system be improved?</p>	<p>Initial detection of recent incursions in Queensland has mainly resulted from the due diligence of skilled biosecurity officers such as the Northern Australian Quarantine Services team, port and industry biosecurity officers. These services are essential to be maintained and resourced. Expert skills are acquired over time through practical experience and mentoring. Governments and key</p>

		<p>industries need to resource a succession plan and cadetship for biosecurity surveillance expertise.</p> <p>A number of Queensland industries agree that plant biosecurity (especially for plant pathogens) resourcing and expertise needs to be increased http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-27/queensland-biosecurity-is-it-safe/5918944 .</p>
19	<p>What specific areas of Australia’s national biosecurity system could benefit from research and innovation in the next five, 10 and 20 years and why? Please provide examples.</p>	<p>Enhanced detection technology needs to progress, especially for plant and animal pathogens.</p> <p>Examples include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Environmental-DNA used to detect the presence of pest fish (eg. Tilapia) in waterways and Class 1 plant pests in forests and other vegetation. Presence of antibodies can determine previous exposure to specific high-risk animal diseases. (b) Crop biotechnology and genetically modified crops for resistance to infection by biosecurity matter, overcome pesticide or antibiotic resistance detected in new incursions. (c) Sterile releases, vaccines, rumen detoxifying bugs and breeding resistant varieties are all potential areas of R&D growth for biosecurity preparedness. (d) Options for controlling biosecurity incursions for organic farmers wanting to retain their organic certification.
24	<p>How can existing or new data sets be better used? How might data be collected from a wider range of sources than government?</p>	<p>Industry supports the use of centralised, accessible community-based mapping and detection databases. Ideally all mapping databases should use the same national mapping standards and legend icons.</p> <p>Two examples of pest mapping programs where community can contribute are:- Western Australia - My WeedWatcher App. https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/weed-surveillance Invasive Animals CRC – Feral Scan for vertebrate pests https://www.feralscan.org.au/</p>

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact AgForce on 07 3236 3100 or email agforce@agforceqld.org.au

Yours sincerely

Charles Burke

CEO