



July 2016

Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review

Via email [igabreview@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:igabreview@agriculture.gov.au)

Dear IGAB Independent Review Panel

**Re: ASF Submission to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review**

The Australian Seed Federation (ASF) is the peak industry body for the Australian seed industry at the local, state, national and international level. The seed industry understands that biosecurity is important to Australia, and takes seed quality and seed health very seriously. The ASF understands seeds can present significant biosecurity risks due to the numerous complex, variable international production pathways, including contracted farms in countries where biosecurity might not always be consistent with Australian standards. With respect to the intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity, the ASF provides the following submission highlighting the need for;

- i. Harmonisation of international biosecurity protocols and consistent domestic administration
- ii. International cooperation and the recognition of local and international industry expertise
- iii. Long term investment in phytopathology research and surveying/monitoring weeds, pests and diseases.
- iv. The introduction an anonymous sample testing option

Members of the ASF have numerous quality control measures in place to ensure these high standards are maintained. Issues with seed health mean a loss of sales. However, the special nature of the seed industry is that seed moves through a number of destinations during its lifecycle and harmonisation of phytosanitary measures is especially important. That is why a number of bodies (such as ISTA and ISHI-Veg) have been set up to ensure appropriate testing procedures and protocols are developed.

The ASF supports the concept of collaborative partnerships for biosecurity risk management in the seed industry, and suggests that the IGAB explore possibilities for implementing more approved pathways for importing seed for sowing. To develop such collaborative partnerships would require the engagement with seed importers, industry associations and where appropriate, international organisations and agencies.

The ASF encourages the Australian national biosecurity system to recognise and utilise international expertise where appropriate.

For example, as a sign of its commitment to global bio-security and the interests of its customers with regard to seed transmitted diseases, the international seed industry has established a successful and well-resourced seed health initiative called ISHI Veg. [http://www.worldseed.org/isf/ishi\\_vegetable.html](http://www.worldseed.org/isf/ishi_vegetable.html)



Netherlands Inspection Service for Horticulture (Naktuinbouw) is an autonomous public agency with a high level of recognised expertise, jointly funded by industry and government. Naktuinbouw develops seed testing protocols independently and with other national and international institutions and private companies.

<http://www.naktuinbouw.com/about-naktuinbouw>

The ASF encourages a long term investment in phytopathology research and surveying/monitoring weeds, pests and diseases. This for example could limit the occurrence of so called incursions that have in fact been established for a while. Currently surveillance for pests, diseases and weeds is important to identifying appropriate measures for the importation of seed as well as maintaining or accessing key markets. This is undertaken through a range of national or state based initiatives, which have been developed and implemented under the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy (Plant Health Committee), the Grains Industry Biosecurity Plan (Plant Health Australia), Biosecurity Investment Strategies (GRDC) and the National R, D and E Strategy for Grains (PISC). However there is no consolidated database that can be used by industry or government.

A viable surveillance capability will most likely involve multiple sources of data capture to help build a more robust information base of pests and weed seeds in Australian grain production areas. For example, it may include data capture from ad hoc observations made by growers and agronomists or in a more coordinated fashion through existing national trial sites such as the National Variety Trials (NVT) or Pasture Trial Network (PTN).

The ASF would also support the introduction of an anonymous sample testing option. Currently growers may be reluctant to test something that appears suspicious for fear of being shut down or stigmatised.

Yours faithfully

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Australian Seed Federation