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11 July 2016

IGAB Review Secretariat
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
igabreview@agriculture.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review

The Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) and WoolProducers Australia (WPA) are the national Peak Industry Bodies representing and promoting the needs of Australia's lamb, sheepmeat and wool producers respectively and welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission into the review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB).

The Australian sheep industry benefits significantly from Australia's robust biosecurity protocols and traceability systems which provide it a significant competitive advantage through Australia's international and domestic reputation as a supplier of safe food and quality fibre. Sustaining these markets and reputation depends on the sheep industries ability to implement and maintain a high animal health status, which is highly reliant on a commitment to animal health and welfare, biosecurity, surveillance, and emergency disease preparedness and response from all levels of government, industry and various stakeholders.

The SCA and WPA considers that IGAB remains a suitable instrument to support Australia's national biosecurity system and that the consolidated priority areas as set out in the discussion paper are appropriate. However, the sheep industry is concerned that the current level of engagement with industry is a fundamental flaw in the implementation and decision making process under the current agreement.

Sound biosecurity outcomes will only be realised when effective engagement and communication between all key biosecurity stakeholders is undertaken. Collaboration between governments, industry and other stakeholders is vital to developing these relationships and requires wide consultation following recognised public participation principles.

As shared responsibility is a fundamental concept underpinning Australia's national biosecurity system, both the SCA and WPA suggests that an agreed process be developed by government, with appropriate engagement of industry, to ensure that biosecurity arrangements are as streamlined and coordinated as possible within and between states while enhancing on-farm biosecurity capability.

While the discussion paper recognises the difficulty of consulting with the significant number of industry and state farming organisations, the agricultural sector has comprehensive and sophisticated mechanisms through which industry can be consulted. The difficulty of consulting cannot be used as an excuse not to do so. Industry representative bodies such as the SCA and WPA have significant capacity to facilitate this and are cognisant of their responsibilities in helping to deliver sound biosecurity outcomes across all aspects of emergency planning, surveillance, detection and management of emerging and established pests and diseases.

Traditionally industry is only being engaged in an advisory capacity, however industry has a significant interest in building awareness and capability in the agricultural sector to help in achieving these outcomes, which is demonstrated through activities such as industry funded training in Emergency Animal Disease preparedness

If government were to utilise industry's established producer networks and expertise, this would not only improve biosecurity protocols but helps to enhance the sheep industries capability as a producer of safe food and quality fibre that is ethically and sustainably produced while enhancing animal welfare through protection from and effective management of disease.

The current arrangements supporting the IGAB as described in Figure 2 of the discussion paper only include industry at the end of the consultation period in what almost appears to be an afterthought. The SCA and WPA supports the development of a consultative structure similar to that proposed by the National Farmers Federation in its submission into the review of the IGAB.

SCA and WPA considers that such a structure would provide a sound framework, in particular for points four and five of the terms of reference, and help to define roles and responsibilities throughout the biosecurity continuum. Further it would significantly improve industry understanding and engagement of one of the core concepts of the IGAB, that of shared responsibility.

In delivering improved biosecurity outcomes to the sheep industry, SCA and WPA are developing a National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy to support sheep producers and supply chain stakeholders undertake biosecurity actions that will improve the capacity of Australian sheep industry to manage the health and welfare of its animals and reduce the risk and spread of endemic disease.

The biosecurity strategy will leverage existing state, national and industry programs, collateral and tools to maintain and strengthen biosecurity practices and protocols to improve and protect the health of the national sheep flock. Intrinsic to the success of the project will be a coordinated and collaborative process that includes both the public and private sectors across all jurisdictions associated with the Australian sheep industry. SCA and WPA look forward to working with the government on this important initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Harvey-Sutton



CEO
Sheepmeat Council of Australia

Jo Hall



CEO
WoolProducers Australia

BACKGROUND - SHEEPMEAT COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

The SCA is the national Peak Industry Council representing and promoting the needs of Australia's lamb and sheepmeat producers.

The objectives of the SCA are;

- to represent and promote the interests of Australian sheepmeat producers;
- to conduct activities necessary for the advancement of the sheepmeat and live sheep export industries;
- to collect and disseminate information concerning the sheepmeat and live sheep export industries;
- to co-operate with industry stakeholders and organisations at the state, national and international levels;
- to maintain interaction and co-operation with its Members, relevant Government departments and authorities at Federal, State, and local government levels, and with other relevant industry organisations;
- to promote the development and resourcing of the agricultural and pastoral industries of Australia;
- to act as the Prescribed Body for the sheepmeat industry in Australia within the Red Meat Industry Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the Australian Meat and Livestock Act 1997 (the Act).

SCA represents sheepmeat producers in Australia and provides a mechanism to bring a diverse range of issues and needs to the policy making process. The Council draws on many formal and informal processes to achieve this. Principal amongst these is input from the state farming organisations, which have extensive networks within their jurisdictions.

As the recognised peak body for the sheepmeat industry under the Act, SCA sets the strategic objectives to be pursued by the levy funded organisations Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), Animal Health Australia (AHA), and the National Residue Survey (NRS), examining and approving their programs and budgets. We are involved in priority setting for industry R&D and marketing activities both domestically and internationally as set out in the Red Meat MoU. Under the MoU SCA assesses the performance of services delivered by expenditure of lamb and mutton levies.

BACKGROUND – WOOLPRODUCERS AUSTRALIA

WoolProducers Australia is the national Peak Industry Body (PIB) representing and promoting the needs of Australia's wool growers. Our membership covers the industry's commercial, superfine and stud breeding sectors.

WoolProducers is nationally representative through our State Farming Organisation (SFO) members and three democratically elected Independent Directors. Through the engagement of Independent Directors, WoolProducers is able to ascertain the needs of growers both within, and external to the SFO system. This sets WoolProducers apart from other wool grower representative groups and gives it the mantle of the only true democratic and representative voice of the Australian wool industry.

WoolProducers is the only wool growing member of Animal Health Australia (AHA), and as such, carries a significant responsibility for decision making on behalf of the industry. This role includes the oversight of the wool industry health and welfare levy collected and administered by AHA.

In 2014 WoolProducers established the WPA Health and Welfare Board Committee and expanded the representation of this Committee by extending an invitation to other wool representative bodies, including Australian Wool Growers Association, Australian Association of Stud Merino Breeders, Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association, to ensure that there was representation and input across the entire wool industry in the expenditure of this levy. The Australian Veterinarian Association – Sheep Special Interest Group also has observer status on this Committee to provide technical advice regarding this levy administered by AHA.

AHA is empowered under the Australian Animal Health Council (Livestock Industries) Funding Act 1996 and is an essential component of sheep health and welfare in Australia.

WoolProducers is the wool industry signatory of the Emergency Animal Diseases Response Agreement (EADRA), and as such plays a critical role in the preparedness activities working across industries and State and Federal Governments.

As the only wool grower organisation with membership of the National Farmers' Federation, WoolProducers is responsible for providing key policy advice on behalf of our members, and other wool growers, to Australia's peak farm body.

WoolProducers also works closely with the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on key issues such as animal health and welfare, biosecurity, pest management control, natural resource management, drought preparedness, emergency animal disease outbreak preparedness and industry development, including research and trade.