



**AgForce submission  
Intergovernmental Agreement on  
Biosecurity Review - Draft Report**



**To:**

IGAB Review Secretariat  
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources  
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## WHO IS AGFORCE QUEENSLAND?

**AgForce Queensland** 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 wool<sup>1</sup>. 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, wool 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 years<sup>2</sup> to eradicate. Crop diseases, pests and weed seed contamination threaten the productivity and export trade for broadacre grain crops. Shared responsibilities to sustain high levels of national biosecurity is paramount for Australia. Awareness, early detection and appropriate, swift action is required for new incursions posing high risk to Australia's trade and environment. Everyone and particularly land managers are committed to prevent, protect and contain established pests, weeds and diseases across Australia.

## SUMMARY

The Review Panel to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) are congratulated on the comprehensive review and forty recommendations. The consultation process has been engaging and thorough. Increased free trade agreements and globalisation pose an ever increasing threat to Australia's biosecurity. Biosecurity is everyone's business, not just government and agriculture. The challenge is developing improved awareness, a duty of care and national biosecurity levies across all community sectors including travellers across Australia and international visitors.

One of the highest priorities in the three proposed reform areas is developing a national biosecurity information system accessible to all jurisdictions, affected industries and communities. Early detection and delimitation are essential for new biosecurity incursions. Currently there are too many state and regional recording systems without integration and with limited involvement by land managers. AgForce recommends the ongoing development of AUSPestCheck<sup>3</sup> as a national, sustainable, collaborative pest and weed monitoring system, which was recently used for determining the range of incursion for the Russian wheat aphid<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics – Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced 2014-15

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7503.0>

<sup>2</sup> 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. <http://apo.org.au/node/35972>

<sup>3</sup> AusPestCheck <https://portal.biosecurityportal.org.au/vcc/pages/home.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Russian wheat aphid distribution map from AUSPestCheck

<https://portal.biosecurityportal.org.au/rwa/Documents/Russian%20Wheat%20Aphid%20Distribution%20Map.pdf>

## **SUMMARY *continued* .....**

There needs to be flexibility in the duration of rapid-response monitoring to determine extent of new incursions. Duration is dependent on availability of screening methods and resources and cannot be prescribed to a four-week period.

There is no reference, connection or consultation with the crop and livestock protection industry in the IGAB Review. Organisations that provide agvet chemicals, vaccines, diagnostic testing materials and other pesticide products are essential for managing priority outbreaks, managing established pests and researching new technologies. Before finalising the Review Report, AgForce recommends the IGAB panel at least consult with the (1) Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority about pesticide availability for mitigation of incursions and pathways for Emergency Use Permits and (2) Croplife Australia as the peak national body for crop protection products and new pest management technologies.

The IGAB review should acknowledge that industry and the general community also manage non-declared pests and weeds that impact on productivity and environment. For example, the dryland grains industry manages nationally established non-declared weeds such as feather top Rhodes grass and fleabane.

AgForce prefers cross-sectoral biosecurity research with an existing long-term Research Development Corporation (RDC) such as the Rural Industries RDC. Collaborations need to build on existing networks. Shared knowledge and outcomes need to be readily accessible to end-users over long periods and not lost in short-lived RDC's.

## DETAILED FEEDBACK

### 1. Request feedback on the roles and responsibilities of national biosecurity participants

AgForce agrees with the Review Panel that biosecurity is everyone's responsibility and duty of care. There are learnings from New Zealand on how to launch a national awareness campaign for everyone to be involved in protecting Australia's biosecurity integrity.

Greater participation in biosecurity will evolve through effective collaborative networks such as the Livestock Biosecurity Network<sup>5</sup>, Plant Health Biosecurity Portal<sup>6</sup> and industry certification systems such as BioSecureHACCP<sup>7</sup>. Government and trading partners need to develop trust in these style of industry-led systems. It is timely to move towards equality within a government-industry-community partnership for managing biosecurity.

One whole sector omitted from the IGAB Review is the crop and livestock protection industry and associated agribusinesses. These are the companies that provide agricultural and veterinary chemicals to control pests and diseases. Provision of pesticides and vaccines by this sector is critical during outbreaks and managing established pests. The IGAB Review has also omitted this sector from Research and Innovation (Chapter 6). Substantial costs are borne by the crop and livestock protection industry in developing new pesticides and providing necessary data for pesticide registration in Australia. The IGAB review panel could seek feedback from the (1) Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority about pesticide availability for mitigation of incursions and pathways for Emergency Use Permits and (2) Croplife Australia as the peak national body for crop protection products and R&I into new pest management technologies.

Suggested amendments to Table 1 – draft roles and responsibilities (pages 11, 12): -

Australian Government	Oversee and provide the national regulatory authority for pesticides which can issue emergency use permits in the event of high-risk biosecurity incursions.
Local Government	In Queensland, local government is responsible for managing invasive plants (weeds) and pest animals. State government and industry manage plant and animal diseases, certain tramp ant species and aquatic pests.
Industry	In addition to “managing <b>declared</b> established pests and diseases on private land”, industry also manages a whole range of non-declared weeds and pests that affect production and/or are toxic to livestock on freehold and leasehold land.  Implement weed seed and disease hygiene procedures to minimise transport and spread of biosecurity risks.  Industry also includes agribusinesses involved in plant and livestock protection who provide timely and cost-effective technologies and registered products for controlling pests, weeds and diseases.
General community	In addition to “managing <b>declared</b> established pests and diseases”, community members also manage non-declared and environmental weeds.  Implement weed seed and disease hygiene procedures to minimise transport and spread of biosecurity risks.

<sup>5</sup> Livestock Biosecurity Network <http://www.lbn.org.au/>

<sup>6</sup> Plant Health Biosecurity Portal <http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/resources/the-biosecurity-portal/>

<sup>7</sup> BioSecureHACCP [http://www.ngia.com.au/Category?Action=View&Category\\_id=127](http://www.ngia.com.au/Category?Action=View&Category_id=127)

The cost of national biosecurity should be borne by everyone, including international visitors and importers. Sustainable funding for biosecurity is essential and needs to be independent from fiscal budgets. A national biosecurity levy would provide a funding source for environmental/ aquatic/ industry incursions, help develop an ethos that biosecurity is everyone's business and share the cost across all benefactors. AgForce supports the Review Panel's suggestion for an incoming passenger biosecurity charge to help fund border protection.

2. *Request feedback on total effort and costs associated with demonstrating area freedom by jurisdictions and the value of that trade.*

For certain export trade opportunities, zones enable trade to continue during a localised incursion and /or provide market premiums. For example, there are national risk profiling tools for individual producers to manage and prevent Johne's Disease in livestock<sup>8</sup>. However Western Australia Government<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>has implemented import permit requirements for stock from other states to maintain bovine Johne's disease-free status for export markets.

The delimitation of red witchweed (*Striga asiatica*) incursion to five properties along coastal Queensland has enabled the grains industry across central Queensland to continue trade<sup>11</sup>.

3. *Request feedback on options for a new entity for cross-sectoral biosecurity R&I.*

AgForce prefers Option 2 to address cross-sectoral biosecurity R&I within an existing RDC such as the Rural Industries RDC. RIRDC has the intrinsic capacity to work across sectors, as evidenced by their recent success in national collaboration for R&D biocontrol studies for 10 national weeds<sup>12</sup> which were co-funded by Australian Government R&D for Profit programme.

Governments need to sustain RDC's in the long term so the wealth of their knowledge and collaborations are sustained. Land and Water Australia RDC was only resourced for 19 years (1990 to 2009) to sustain productive agricultural landscapes across Australia. Now this useful knowledge to end-users has been archived. Similarly, the strategies and best practice manuals developed for 32 Weeds of National Significance (WoNS)<sup>13</sup> have been shelved and resources were ceased for the Weeds Australia website and national coordinators. Responsibility of Phase 3 WoNS was passed back to State Governments in 2013, however the developed best practice guides, networks and other useful information was lost.

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<sup>8</sup> Johne's Disease <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/jd-cattle-tools/>

<sup>9</sup> Western Australia border control for Johne's disease <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-23/wa-new-border-controls-for-bovine-johnes-disease-in-cattle/8289716> and <http://www.beefcentral.com/news/wa-breaks-ranks-with-other-states-on-bjd/>

<sup>10</sup> Bovine Johne's disease regulation in Western Australia <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-biosecurity/bovine-johne%E2%80%99s-disease-bjd-regulation-western-australia>

<sup>11</sup> National management group for eradication of red witchweed <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/media-centre/communiques/red-witchweed>

<sup>12</sup> Government funding announced for weed biocontrol R&D project, RIRDC <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/news/2016/04/15/government-funding-announced-for-weed-biocontrol-r-d-project>

<sup>13</sup> Weeds of National Significance <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/weeds/lists/wons.html>

4. *Request feedback on the Terms of Reference for the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC).*

Membership to the NBC should include Australia's Chief Plant Protection Officer<sup>14</sup> and Chief Veterinary Officer<sup>15</sup>. The NBC must retain capacity to establish cross-sectoral sub-committees such as the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee<sup>16</sup> to handle issues arising from environmental and /or community pests, diseases, weeds and tramp ants that fall outside the scope of the proposed Animal and Plant Health Committees.

5. *Request feedback on funding options for rapid-response to an exotic pest or disease incursion.*

AgForce prefers Option 2 for a default funding arrangement for when decisions cannot be quickly reached about an eradication program. Delimitation of a new outbreak is essential when assessing feasibility of eradication. There needs to be flexibility in the time allowed to determine delimitation and to mobilise resources in the outbreak zone. Option 2 provides flexibility in the duration of monitoring. Duration is dependent on the availability of methods and resources to screen, detect and confirm presence of a disease or pest incursion.

AgForce welcomes the IGAB Review recommendations to develop a common biosecurity data and information system across all jurisdictions, industries and other stakeholders. Currently there are too many isolated surveillance systems using a vast range of data capture standards and limited access to agricultural industry groups. AgForce recommends the ongoing development of AUSPestCheck<sup>17</sup> as a national pest and weed monitoring system, which was recently used for determining the range of incursion for the Russian wheat aphid<sup>18</sup>. Is there scope to link invasive plant, algae and fungi monitoring data of established pests to searchable records held in Australia's Virtual Herbarium<sup>19</sup>? This universally accessible integrated flora information system contains distribution data and spatial maps for introduced, naturalised and native species, including pest species. Any national biosecurity information system needs to be housed on a standalone website that does not change with future changes in government structure or names of departments.

## Further information

For further discussion on any points raised in this submission, please contact AgForce Policy Officer Marie Vitelli, phone 07 3236 3100 or email [agforce@agforceqld.org.au](mailto:agforce@agforceqld.org.au)

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<sup>14</sup> Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/plant/health/acppo>

<sup>15</sup> Australian Chief Veterinary Officer <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/animal/health/acvo>

<sup>16</sup> Invasive Plants and Animals Committee <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/invasive/ipac>

<sup>17</sup> AusPestCheck <https://portal.biosecurityportal.org.au/vcc/pages/home.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> Russian wheat aphid distribution map from AUSPestCheck <https://portal.biosecurityportal.org.au/rwa/Documents/Russian%20Wheat%20Aphid%20Distribution%20Map.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Australia's Virtual Herbarium <https://avh.chah.org.au/>