



26 February 2021

ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION PAPER – COMMENCEMENT OF A REVIEW OF BIOSECURITY IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESH OKRA FRUIT FROM INDIA

The commencement of this risk analysis is in response to a market access request for fresh okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus* L.) fruit from India.

There are two types of risk analyses used by the department:

- a Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis (BIRA) which is conducted through a regulated process provided for in the [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) and the [Biosecurity Regulation 2016](#)
- a review of biosecurity import requirements for the purposes of Section 174 of the Biosecurity Act.

A preliminary assessment of the pests associated with okra from India has identified that the potential pests of biosecurity concern are the same as, or similar to, pests that have been assessed previously by Australia on other horticultural commodities, and do not pose significantly different biosecurity risks. These pests include fruit flies, tetranychid mites, shoot/fruit borers, a bollworm, a leaf roller, thrips, mealybugs and a scale insect.

Given the similar pests of concern, and that there are appropriate risk management measures already established for these pests or pest groups, the risk analysis for okra fruit from India will be progressed as a review of biosecurity import requirements, consistent with the [Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis Guidelines 2016](#).

Okra

Okra, or lady's fingers, is a flowering plant in the mallow family (Malvaceae). It is valued for its edible green seed pods and is cultivated in tropical, subtropical and warm temperate regions around the world.

Commodity to be assessed

The risk analysis will cover fresh okra fruit for human consumption from India.

Okra fruit is a green or red fibrous pod that produces mucilage or 'slime' when cooked. The mucilage contains soluble fibre. Pods are consumed both raw and cooked in various ways.

Okra industry in India

India is the world's largest producer of okra with over 60% of the global production. India produces approximately 6 million tonnes of okra per year and exports okra to several international markets.

Okra is grown throughout the year with peak production between April and July.

The state of West Bengal is the leading producer of okra, contributing 15% of the okra grown in India. Other major okra producing states are Bihar, Gujarat and Odisha.



Table 1: Production of okra in Indian states in 2014–2015

State	Production area (ha)	Production (Tonnes)
West Bengal	75,450	882,390
Bihar	57,710	762,900
Gujarat	65,990	759,040
Odisha	64,630	571,930
Jharkhand	32,870	452,120
Andhra Pradesh	31,230	374,740
Others	179,600	2,049,910

Source: Horticulture Statistics Division, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare.

Australian okra imports

Australia has an import policy in place for fresh okra from Fiji. Between 2013 and 2017, Australia imported 3.6 tonnes of okra from Fiji. There have been no okra imports since 2018.

Okra industry in Australia

The Australian okra industry produces over 2,500 tonnes of okra per annum and is focussed on domestic supply mainly to major city markets, including Sydney and Melbourne.

Most of Australia's okra is grown around Darwin in the Northern Territory. Okra is also grown in the Burdekin region and the Lockyer Valley in Queensland, and Carnarvon in Western Australia, with smaller volumes grown in other states.

Australian grown okra is available year-round with peak production between May and July.

Trade between Australia and India

India is Australia's eighth largest trading partner with two-way goods and services totalling \$26.2 billion in 2019–20.

Preliminary assessment of Indian okra fruit

A preliminary assessment identified pests associated with okra from India and requiring further consideration to be 2 fruit flies, 2 tetranychid mites, 5 moths (3 shoot/fruit borers, a bollworm and a leaf roller), 3 thrips, 3 mealybugs and a scale insect. Further assessment of these potential pests will determine which will require risk management measures to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection.

Next steps

A draft report of this review of biosecurity import requirements is expected to be published on our website by the end of 2021. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to submit comments on the draft report during a 60-day consultation period.

We will consider all stakeholder comments in the preparation of the final report.



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

The recommendations in the final report will reflect the completion of the risk analysis for fresh okra fruit from India. The recommended measures will have been assessed as scientifically sound and appropriate to manage any potential risks to Australia's biosecurity presented by the importation of fresh okra fruit from India.

If you would like to know more about this risk analysis or the risk analysis review process please email [imports](#) or phone 1800 900 090 (option 1, option 1).