

From: Joel Brockhoff [joelbrockhoff@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, 2 July 2011 11:19 PM
To: BA - Plant Biosecurity Contact
Subject: NZ apple imports

To whom it may concern,

As an apple and pear grower in the Adelaide Hills in SA, i am concerned at the risks posed to our industry from the introduction of pests and diseases from New Zealand.

As it took Tasmania 37 years and much Government funding to eradicate European canker, it's risk to our industry is 'high', to say the least. Leaf rolling midge will inevitably require the use of more insecticides in the orchard, but of greatest concern is, of course, Fireblight.

My understanding of the effect of Fireblight in Australia is that it will be disastrous. We have a climate which suits Fireblight better than NZ. We have a vibrant and productive pear industry, which NZ has had to abandon due to the devastation Fireblight causes to pears. Around 40% of our orchard and a significant proportion of our industry's orchards are of the variety Pink Lady (Cripps Pink), which is similarly as susceptible as pears to Fireblight. We don't have access to streptomycin, the antibiotic used as a preventative spray in NZ and other countries to help reduce Fireblight infections (and also tuberculosis in humans), nor do we want to use it.

I understand that during WTO hearings NZ made the point that fruit infected with Fireblight bacteria could not transfer the infection to a wholesome apple. However as this is a plant disease rather than an apple disease, the reality is that an infected fruit could transfer Fireblight directly to a host plant in a backyard compost scenario.

Also of concern is that of the 40 odd countries with Fireblight, three quarters of them do not know how the bacteria was introduced. Even more concerning is that no country has ever eradicated Fireblight.

If we are going to accept fresh apple imports from countries afflicted with Fireblight I think the protocols suggested in 4th of May's analysis of existing policy for apples from New Zealand, is not going to be thorough enough to keep us free from Fireblight.

I am alarmed that we are relying on foreign businesses who are set to make financial gain from this agreement to manage our biosecurity.

It would be acceptable in other fresh produce export situations for the exporting country to fund visits by inspectors from the destination country to, at timely intervals, make checks, both in the orchard and in the packing shed, that protocol is being adhered to and the produce is guaranteed to be pest and disease free. Surely, for such a devastating disease, this is appropriate.

Similarly the sample of fruit being inspected for leaves and other trash on arrival in Australia needs to be of a meaningful size. 600 fruit could be the equivalent of only four cartons. 600 fruit is only acceptable if they come from 600 different cartons.

Regions affected by any of these three pest and diseases must be excluded from trade for at least the current season.

I feel let down by Biosecurity Australia in recent times and consider that Australia in our unique position in the world must maintain our clean and green image on the world stage and therefore we must make decisions that protect Australian consumers and ultimately Australia's ability to feed ourselves.

I hope that Biosecurity Australia has the courage to stand up for growers of all produce in Australia, as a very dangerous precedent will be set if we allow other countries to decide our acceptable level of risk to Australia's biosecurity.

Thanks for your time,

regards, Joel Brockhoff.

Otherwood Orchards
Lenswood SA
joelbrockhoff@gmail.com
0408066119