

# Release of the *Draft report for the review of import conditions for fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand*

## Questions and Answers 3 July 2012

### REVIEW OF IMPORT CONDITIONS

#### Why has this review of import conditions for fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand been made?

New Zealand requested renewed market access for fresh potatoes for processing in 2006. This is New Zealand's highest priority agriculture market access request for Australia.

#### Have potatoes previously been imported from New Zealand?

Yes. Fresh potatoes for processing were previously permitted from New Zealand under strict biosecurity conditions. The main import requirements were as follows:

- potatoes to be sourced from New Zealand's main potato production area Manawatu-Rangitikei region and certified as being free from potato cyst nematode (*Globodera rostochiensis* and *G. pallida*) and potato black wart (*Synchytrium endobioticum*)
- potatoes to be clean and healthy
- potatoes to be processed in quarantine approved premises located in a metropolitan area
- all waste material (including any soil, packaging, wastewater, etc.) to be disposed of under appropriate quarantine conditions.

The import of fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand was suspended in 1988, as New Zealand could no longer meet the area freedom requirements for potato cyst nematode.

#### What is a review of import conditions and how does it work?

A review of import conditions is a process that re-assesses the risk management measures and import conditions of an existing policy in response to new information or changes in biosecurity risk for the import of commodities into Australia.

This review has taken into consideration previous requirements established for the importation of fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand, current biosecurity policies and domestic requirements for the interstate movement of potatoes within Australia.

#### What work has been conducted by DAFF Biosecurity as part of this review process?

DAFF Biosecurity has conducted an assessment of the pests and diseases associated with the importation of New Zealand potatoes, reviewed all existing quarantine conditions for the importation of potatoes (domestic and international), including previous import conditions for New Zealand potatoes for processing, and has considered current policies for pests of quarantine concern to Australia.

In addition, DAFF Biosecurity has visited a potato processing facility as well as New Zealand's main potato production area to verify the operational procedures for growing, packing and processing potatoes. These investigations have assisted with the assessment of the risks posed with the import of New Zealand potatoes for processing and with the development of appropriate risk management measures.

#### What quarantine measures have been proposed for fresh potatoes from New Zealand?

DAFF Biosecurity is proposing that fresh potatoes from New Zealand be permitted entry to Australia subject to a range of quarantine conditions:

- processing of potatoes in a quarantine approved premises (QAP), which must have a waste management program in place to collect, store, transport, treat and dispose of all waste in a quarantine approved manner; and
- a supporting operational system to maintain and verify the phytosanitary status of potatoes in compliance with the *MAFBNZ Export Compliance Programme for the Provision of Additional Declarations (Potato Cyst Nematode and Potato Wart)*; and
- pre-export phytosanitary inspection and certification by MPI or Independent Verification Agency; and on-arrival phytosanitary inspection and clearance for processing in QAP by DAFF Biosecurity.

## CONSULTATION

### **Have stakeholders been consulted during the review process?**

DAFF Biosecurity consulted industry stakeholders early in the review process to allow stakeholders the opportunity to raise any concerns. A paper was presented to industry stakeholders outlining the preliminary assessment conducted by DAFF Biosecurity, key issues and risks identified with the importation of New Zealand potatoes and proposed risk management measures.

DAFF Biosecurity has also provided additional information to a number of industry representatives and Members of Parliament who have raised concerns over the risks posed by the importation of New Zealand potatoes for processing.

### **What are the next steps in the review process?**

DAFF Biosecurity has released the proposed import conditions, to enable all interested stakeholders to comment. A formal comment period of 60 days applies.

DAFF Biosecurity will consider all submissions received on the draft report for the review of import conditions during the comment period and may consult informally with stakeholders in regards to their submissions.

Anyone interested in this process should register as a stakeholder. This can be done through the DAFF Biosecurity website at [www.daff.gov.au/ba/stakeholder](http://www.daff.gov.au/ba/stakeholder).

### **What are the main pests and diseases identified as being of quarantine concern?**

DAFF Biosecurity has reviewed the available literature and conducted an assessment of the pests and diseases present in New Zealand associated with potatoes. Based on these assessments a number of pests and diseases have been identified as being of quarantine concern to Australia.

The main pests of concern being: two species of potato cyst nematode (PCN), the bacterium "*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*" that causes the disease 'zebra chip' and its associated vector, the tomato-potato psyllid.

### Potato Cyst Nematode

Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) is present in Australia. It has previously been recorded from Western Australia and Victoria. Western Australia has undertaken an eradication program and is now considered to be free from PCN.

Victoria has a management program and domestic quarantine controls in place to limit the spread of PCN, which is under official control in a number of jurisdictions.

Australia has domestic requirements regulating the interstate movement of potatoes within Australia to prevent the spread of PCN, therefore quarantine measures for imported potatoes can be justified.

New Zealand produces its potatoes under a compliance program for PCN, which requires production site freedom from PCN, for potatoes that are exported.

### "*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*"

"*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*", which was previously known as "*Candidatus Liberibacter psyllarous*", was detected in New Zealand in 2008.

DAFF Biosecurity conducted a pest risk analysis (PRA) for "*Candidatus Liberibacter psyllarous*" in fresh fruit, potatoes, nursery stock and its vector the tomato-potato psyllid, which was finalised in September 2009.

Quarantine measures were proposed for the import of all potential host commodities, including potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, etc. Australia currently imports tomatoes and capsicums from New Zealand under the measures outlined in this PRA.

### **Is there a risk of the bacterium "*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*" and its vector being imported with New Zealand fresh potatoes?**

The 2009 pest risk analysis conducted for this bacterium, which causes the disease zebra chip in potatoes, recommended quarantine measures that would reduce the risks of importation of potatoes from New Zealand and achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection.

The risk of importing the tomato-potato psyllid (the vector of "*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*") on New Zealand potatoes was assessed as negligible, as it feeds on the leafy part of the potato plant and is not associated with potato tubers.

### **What mitigation measures were recommended for the bacterium?**

Area freedom from the bacterium or processing of potatoes in quarantine approved premises (QAP), which must have a waste management program in place to collect, store, transport, treat and dispose of all waste in a quarantine approved manner, was determined to be effective in reducing the risk to an acceptable level to achieve an appropriate level of protection.

### **How is processing under quarantine control effective in managing risk?**

Processing under quarantine control ensures that the quarantine risks associated with imported potatoes are contained and managed. All quarantine approved processing facilities would be required to meet specific standards in relation to storing and processing potatoes and the subsequent disposal of waste material. In addition, potatoes moved from the port of entry to the processing facility would need to be secured in sealed containers. These measures prevent the Australian environment being exposed to imported potatoes and any pests or diseases that may be associated with them.

## **BACKGROUND QUESTIONS**

### **Can Australia have zero risk?**

Science-based risk analysis provides an important foundation for safe trade. Australia only accepts imports once we are confident that the risks of pests and diseases that could be associated with specific imports can be managed in accordance with Australia's appropriate level of protection, which requires quarantine risks to be reduced to a very low level.

Australia exports almost two-thirds of its agricultural produce. The future of our agricultural and food industries, including their capacity to contribute to growth and jobs, depends on Australia's capacity to maintain a good plant and animal health status. Our future also depends on the conditions our industries face overseas.

As a signatory of the World Trade Organization, Australia supports fair and consistent trading rules for international trade. Consistent rules here and abroad help benefit Australian trade and potentially open new markets.

A 'zero risk' stance is impractical, as it would mean no tourists, no international travel and no

imports of commodities. Nevertheless, Australia invests heavily in biosecurity to ensure that risks are managed to a very low level.

### **Does Australia import fresh potatoes?**

The import of fresh potatoes for human consumption and for processing is currently prohibited entry to Australia from all countries.

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