



New South Wales

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

DGO08/565

17 JUL 2008

Mr John Cahill
Chief Executive
Biosecurity Australia
GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Cahill

I refer to the release by Biosecurity Australia (BA) in May 2008 of the Draft Import Risk Analysis report for fresh capsicum (paprika) from the Republic of Korea, for which stakeholder comment was requested.

A technical review undertaken by experts in NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) indicates that BA has underestimated the likelihood and consequences of risk that NSW could incur from thrips if capsicums were to be imported into Australia from the Republic of Korea. Of particular significance is the chemical resistance profile of thrips introduced from overseas.

Thrips, such as Western flower thrips (WFT), can have a very short life cycle and are resistant to many insecticides. NSW DPI horticulturists and entomologists advise that considerable risks relate to the chemical resistance profiles of thrips that may be introduced on foreign commodities. The issue is not whether the species of thrips are exotic, but what chemical controls have been applied and whether the resistance that has built up in thrips from other countries is different from the resistance profile of that thrips species in Australia. If so, the introduction of those thrips could override Australia's chemical control options for thrips.

Of the thrips species considered in the IRA:

- (a) *Frankliniella intonsa* – European flower thrips (called Taiwan flower thrips in IRA stone fruits from USA) are exotic to NSW and Australia.
- (b) *F. occidentalis* – Western flower thrips are present in NSW. These thrips are currently the most significant pest in the Sydney basin and nationally more projects are being funded on WFT than on any other insect. WFT is highly resistant to most chemicals and very few are available for use on vegetables.
- (c) *Thrips palmi* – Melon thrips are reported in the IRA as present in the Northern Territory, Queensland, NSW and Victoria. Contrary to the IRA, the Australian Plant Pest Database indicates that there are no substantive records of this pest in NSW or Victoria. However, melons and other hosts of melon thrips require a Plant Health Certificate (PHC) when moving from NSW to South Australia. The PHC places

conditions on produce grown on properties located within 100 km of known infested areas. A small part of NSW is affected by the 100 km zone ruling due to infestations of *T. palmi* in south east Queensland.


The IRA did not mention production protocols such as appropriate screening of greenhouses to limit insect entry even though it is acknowledged that adult thrips can travel considerable distances with the wind. Adult thrips are also capable of transmitting viruses. The IRA identified a number of viruses which are associated with the capsicum crop in Korea that are not present in Australia. However the IRA excluded all of them from further assessment.

In the pest categorisation table, two organisms which have been identified as associated with capsicum production in Korea and are not present in Australia but were dismissed from further assessment, warrant further consideration. These are:

- (a) *Agrotis segetum* – Turnip moth. When the United States Department of Agriculture approved importation of capsicum from Korea in 2006, *A. segetum* was mentioned as one of the pests targeted by the conditions of entry. As a condition of entry, capsicums were to be grown in approved insect-proof, pest-free greenhouses and packed in pest exclusionary packinghouses.
- (b) *Peanut stunt virus* (PSV) – Cucumovirus. PSV was excluded from further assessment because it was identified as being seed-borne and "capsicum seed for planting is permitted entry into Australia". However, this IRA is assessing pest and disease risks due to importation of fresh capsicum and PSV is an exotic disease which could be introduced into Australia on the fresh capsicum pathway.

In finalising the next version of this IRA, we would appreciate it if you would indicate where our issues have been addressed.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD SHELDRAKE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL