

PLEASE QUOTE

YOUR REFERENCE:

OUR REFERENCE: GW0706281052

ENQUIRIES TO: Mr Graham Webb PSM
28th June, 2007.

Mr David Porritt
General Manager
Plant Bio Security,
Bio Security Australia
GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Rec 3/7

*See P's file
thanks
DP*

Dear David,

REVISED DRAFT IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS REPORT FOR BANANAS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above Draft. After careful consideration of the Report and its identification of proposed pests, risks and quarantine measures and also after discussions with the Chairman, Patrick Leahy, and Chairman Banana Imports Committee, Len Collins of the Australian Banana Growers Inc., I prepare the following Submission on behalf of the Johnstone Shire Council and Community.

On the 8th February, 2007, the State Government dissolved the Johnstone Shire Council and appointed me as Administrator up until the conclusion of the March, 2008 Local Government Elections. Since my arrival I have observed the positive attitude, drive, enthusiasm and passion in this Region. If the strength of development in planning applications being considered by me at Council Meetings are guides there are tremendous opportunities in developing and promoting the Region – socially, economically and for long term sustainability.

The Johnstone Shire Council and Community – 'Green Like You Have Never Seen'

With a population of the Johnstone Shire of approximately 19,200 people and a population catchment of about 35,000 this is a Region with an exciting range of cultures which enrich the area more than is evident. The District is heavily reliant on the success of its Rural Industries particularly sugar cane and bananas. Other primary industries include, fishing, paw paw and other tropical fruit growing, aquaculture and cattle grazing.

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Some large manufactures support these industries and also export products, appliances and equipment inter state and overseas.

The Johnstone Shire covers 1,639 sq k and about half is protected by the Wet Tropics World Heritage area.

Response

At the outset it is important to state any move to allow the import of bananas from the Philippines will have a devastating impact on this Region. For your information when you look at the following statistics you will accept that this is a resilient Community which redefines – ‘overcoming diversity’.

- On 20th March, 2006, the Johnstone Shire and Region was devastated by Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Larry resulting in significant structural damage and almost the complete loss of the banana and sugar industries;
- Following the cyclone the region experienced up to four metres of rain hampering the relief and recovery effort and getting all rural industries back into production;
- The dismissal of the Council by the State Government on the 8th February, 2007, and my appointment as Administrator;
- Identified by Queensland Treasury Corporation as the most financially stressed Council of ninety-four surveyed;
- The leading candidate for amalgamation with adjoining Local Governments under Queensland Local Government Reform; and
- Release of findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that the Johnstone Shire has the fastest declining population in Queensland.

In relation to the above statistics any change in circumstances which will allow the import of bananas from the Philippines will adversely impact on the outstanding progress being made by the Community and its rural producers in restoring this Community and its industries to the normality after an extremely trying twelve months period.

The loss of population following the release of the recent Census results is not a true reflection on the current situation in the Johnstone Shire. Clearly as a result of the substantial damage from Cyclone Larry to business, homes, and employment opportunities lost as a result of the devastation of the banana industry a number of residents and traditional banana pickers left the District for a period of time.

The industry has bounced back

Any outbreak of the banana diseases identified in the Risk Analysis Report, particularly Moko and Black Sigatora as a result of imported bananas would significantly impact on the industry with a resulting impact on the economic and social fabric of this Community. A Black Sigatora outbreak would also mean a dramatic increase (up to fifty sprays per crop) in the application of fungicides as growers would frantically attempt to control the spread of the disease with resulting environmental impact and cost to the Region.

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Council's understanding of the industry's response

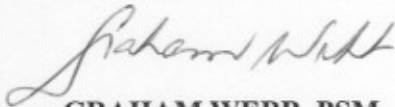
Unlike Europe and the United States of America, which pay lip service to World Free Trade, Australia does not provide Subsidies for its rural producers and mostly rural producers are responsible for competition on an uneven playing field on the World export stage.

The banana industry has been on the front foot to ensure Australian consumers have access to a wonderful and healthy product. In this regard Council supports the industries initiatives in imposing a levy which in part will maximise opportunities marketing, research and development which will allow the industry to invest in its future; developing the banana industry beyond the current banana growing areas; and the new country of origin of labelling initiative for fruit and vegetable sold in Australia. Clearly these initiatives should be recognised.

Conclusion

I trust you will take into account the Council's concerns and support for the Australian Banana Industry.

Yours faithfully



GRAHAM WEBB PSM
ADMINISTRATOR
JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL