Dear Stakeholder

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the outcome of the first round of consultation on the import risk analysis (IRA) concerning maize from the USA.

In my letter of 5 September 1997 stakeholders were invited to provide written comments on the type of process and the proposed panel membership. The responses received have now been considered by AQIS.

Type of process

Many stakeholders who provided comments supported the proposal that the IRA of maize be undertaken using the non-routine process. For the benefit of newly-listed stakeholders, an outline of the non-routine process referred to in my previous letter is provided at Attachment 1.

Several stakeholders opposed the IRA process proceeding, arguing that the IRA handbook has not been released for comment by AQIS, and that the IRA of maize should not be a high priority for consideration.

The IRA handbook is currently being drafted and should be released shortly. When AQIS has prepared the handbook on the risk analysis process it will hold a series of information seminars for stakeholders so that the process is fully understood. Comments of stakeholders will be taken into account in the finalisation of this document.

Prioritisation of import access requests is an AQIS responsibility. AQIS has a responsibility to consider all import access requests in a timely manner within the constraints of available resources and the required process. In determining priorities, AQIS weighs up all requests that are before it for consideration, and the resources available at any time to undertake analyses.

On this basis AQIS has concluded that assessment of quarantine risks associated with proposed maize imports is a high priority.

Panel membership

Responses by stakeholders showed widespread support for the proposed composition of the risk assessment panel. A number of stakeholders nominated alternative panel members for consideration, including industry representatives.

There was a specific suggestion from some stakeholders that the membership of the panel should include scientific expertise more directly relevant to the import risk analysis of maize.

In light of these comments AQIS has decided to include Professor John Irwin as a member of the panel in place of Dr Rob Brown.

Accordingly the membership of the panel will be:

Dr Bill Roberts (Chair)
Assistant Director

Plant Quarantine Policy Branch Policy and International Division
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Dr Bob Ikin
Head, Pest Risk Analysis Section
Plant Quarantine Policy Branch
Policy and International Division
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Mr Bill Magee
Program Manager, Grain
Animal and Plant Programs Branch
Quarantine and Exports Operations Division
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Mr Mev Connell
Adviser to the CSIRO Entomology Division
Formerly Chief Executive Officer, Grain Elevators Board of Victoria;
Director, Australian Wheat Board; Assistant General Manager, Australian Wheat Board)

Professor John Irwin
Professor of Botany
University of Queensland and Director,
Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Plant Pathology

A precis of the curriculum vitae of each member of the panel is included at Attachment 2.[Not provided electronically]

Other scientific experts nominated by stakeholders will be considered as possible members of working groups which may be initiated by the panel.

Other issues

A number of stakeholders expressed concern that although they agreed with the type of process, they believed the proposed timeframe should be shortened. As the non-routine process cannot be shortened without reducing the time for consultation and appeal periods, this is not considered an option.

Some stakeholders also provided comments on scientific or other issues which will be the subject of consultation later in the process. All stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide further comments on specific issues at a later date.

Appeals

Stakeholders may appeal AQIS's decisions on this matter by writing to the Director of Quarantine, whose address is:

Mr Paul Barratt
Director of Quarantine
Department of Primary Industries and Energy

GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The closing date for appeals is 19 January 1998.

AQIS expresses its appreciation to all stakeholders who contributed to this consultation phase.

Yours sincerely

Digby Gascoine
Director
Policy and International Division

Attachment 1

NON-ROUTINE IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS PROCESS

1. AQIS advises stakeholders that an import access request has been received.

2. AQIS determines the priority of the risk analysis, considers the type of process to be followed, proposes panel members, and develops a tiMETAble for the import risk analysis.

   AQIS advises stakeholders and invites stakeholders to comment on the type of process proposed and the panel membership. A consultation period follows.

3. AQIS considers stakeholder comments on the type of process proposed and the panel membership and finalises its position on these issues. Stakeholders are then advised of this position and an appeal period follows.

   Any stakeholder with significant concerns about the panel membership or the type of process to be followed may appeal to the Director of Quarantine (the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy) who will consider the appeal.

4. The risk analysis panel prepares an Issues Paper outlining the technical issues to be considered during the risk analysis. This paper is circulated to stakeholders. A consultation period for comment follows.

5. The risk analysis panel conducts the risk analysis, taking into consideration the comments received from stakeholders on the Issues Paper and input from specialised working parties that the panel may initiate.

   When the risk analysis is completed the panel prepares a Draft Risk Analysis Paper for circulation to stakeholders. The paper will include

an analysis of the quarantine risks and the proposed risk management strategies.

6. The panel considers stakeholder comments and finalises its position on the proposed import and the quarantine conditions that will apply.

   The Executive Director of AQIS makes the decision on whether to grant access to the proposed import. Stakeholders are advised of this decision and the commencement of an appeal period during which stakeholders may lodge an appeal on the process which was followed during the risk analysis.

   If an appeal is lodged, the Director of Quarantine will convene an Import Risk Analysis Appeal Panel to consider the appeal.

7. If there is no appeal, or if a problem with the process has been successfully addressed, AQIS implements its decision on the import access request.