Strawberries Australia Inc.

Report for Strawberry Imports from Korea

The Draft Report identifies seven quarantine pests of Strawberries of which five are of National concern. The two that are of most concern are *Drosophila suzukii* (spotted wing drosophila) and *Xanthomonas fragariae* (angular leaf spot), a bacterial disease for which there is no practical field control measures.

The Report concludes that for *Drosophila suzukii*, the consequences of establishment in Australia are high and that strawberry imports from Korea could only occur under 'Area freedom', the possibility of which is unlikely, or after appropriate treatment by methyl bromide fumigation or irradiation. Provided these treatments have been shown scientifically to be effective, the Australian industry would accept the Report recommendation.

The Draft Report concludes that for *Xanthomonas fragariae*, pest free areas, pest free places of production or pest free production sites would be acceptable or an unidentified systems approach would be examined.

The Australian strawberry industry considered the following points:

- This disease has been reported in greenhouse and field crops in Korea.
- Testing for the disease in Korea is done on imported Daughter plants but not during the production of certified plants or fruit production.
- Infection of plants can be in the crown, leaf and calyx and may even be symptomless.

The above points lead the local industry to the conclusion that unrestricted entry of strawberries would certainly result in introduction of the disease into Australia and given that it has already been eliminated three times, that it could establish again. The fear is that the Report might underestimate the danger of establishment for the following reasons.

The Report states spread of the disease is assisted by rain or overhead watering and that Greenhouse production reduces this risk. While 97% of production is in greenhouses in Korea it is the exact opposite in Australia where the great majority of production is from field plantings and conditions in spring in major production areas would be ideal for spread of *Xanthomonas*.

The Report acknowledges that under some conditions, species of *Potentilla* can be infected. The occurrence of *Potentilla* across all strawberry production areas is not documented but it is reasonably common in gardens in the Southern Victorian production area. Though not regarded as a weed it is a very hardy plant and can probably be spread by birds. The report says that there are no reports of infection of *Potentilla* plants under natural conditions in the field. This is no guarantee that it would not occur if *Potentilla* and strawberries are growing in close proximity.

Given that the calyx can be infected but remain symptomless, the chance that the infection could be moved between States during normal marketing is high.

This means that in Australia, infected plants could also be sold during normal runner propagation.

The report relies on the fact that Australia has planting material certified as free of pests and pathogens, available in Queensland and Victoria. This assumption is not true and neither scheme would claim freedom from all pests and pathogens and these schemes would almost certainly never have even tested for angular leaf spot. Given that propagation material is produced in open fields and is concentrated in restricted areas, any unidentified infection could mean spread of the disease interstate and if the infection were recognized it would almost certainly threaten the interstate movement of runners and pose a threat to the supply of plants across Australia.

The Report suggests that Area Freedom or pest free production sites might be acceptable. However, the Report also states that angular leaf spot does occur in greenhouses in Korea and that infections may be symptomless. Given these facts the Australian Strawberry industry does not accept that pest free areas or production sites would be adequate levels of protection against a disease that if established in Australia would be well suited to the climate in production areas and for which industry would not have any adequate control measures.

The other possibility of a Systems Approach is not addressed in this submission simply because there is no explanation of what it would entail.

The Australian strawberry industry concludes that because the risk of introduction is real, any strawberries exported from Korea to Australia should be fumigated with methyl bromide, which is the treatment imposed on strawberries exported to Australia from the United States of America.

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