



Deputy Secretary

Senator the Hon. Bill Heffernan
Chair
Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Heffernan

Thank you for your letter of 14 September 2012 to the Secretary requesting that he "delay a final decision in relation to the import conditions for fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand until after the committee has conducted its inquiry, and tabled its report on 21 November 2012". I apologise for the delay in responding and note that you raised the matter of having not received a response to your letter at the Senate Inquiry hearing on 24 October 2012.

As you know, the draft review of import conditions for fresh potatoes for processing was released in July for 60 days public comment that closed on 3 September 2012. The Department is now considering the twenty seven stakeholder comments received as a result of that process. The department will also seek an evaluation of its draft review and its consideration of these public comments from an internationally renowned bacteriologist. These actions will take some time, and on this basis as I indicated in the hearing on 24 October 2012 I do not expect the department to settle on import conditions before 21 November 2012.

Thank you for bringing the considerations of the Committee to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Rona Mellor

29 October 2012

- cc. Dr Colin Grant
First Assistant Secretary
Plant Division
- cc. Senator the Hon. Hoe Ludwig
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and forestry
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

