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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **Inquiry into the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and related Bills**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond, on behalf of the Australian cherry industry, to the Government's proposed new Biosecurity Legislation and related Bills and the Senate Inquiry.

Cherry Growers Australia (CGA) is the peak industry body representing the interests of commercial Cherry growers in Australia in matters of national importance including regulation and legislation, marketing, research and development.

Our industry has 400 growers in all States, see the Brochure attached and the value of the Industry each season is about \$150 million and expanding that represents increasing sales in both the domestic and over 30 international markets.

The CGA Board welcomes the updating of the *Quarantine Act 1908* and its amendments over the last 100 years into the new Biosecurity Bill 2014 and related Bills that will set the framework for the next 50- 100 years.

CGA is fully supportive of initiatives aimed at building a system to better manage the risks of pests and diseases entering, establishing and spreading in Australia and potentially causing harm to people, the environment and the economy, especially linked to our industry, that have been identified in our national industry biosecurity plan and orchard biosecurity manual both developed with Plant Health Australia .

As a member of Plant Health Australia, CGA like the other deciduous tree fruit industries are always aware of risks to our industry from the importation of similar fruit from other

countries and also root stock and new breeds and varieties that growers want to use for commercial crops.

In relation to this and not wanting to replicate our previous submission back in December 2012, CGA is fully supportive and agrees with all the issues raised on the key issues raised previously and are covered in the new Bills.

These were:

- Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis Process;
- Prevention and Control Measures;
- Accreditation of Overseas Approved Facilities;
- Emergency Provisions;
- Australian Appropriate Levels of Protection and SPS agreements; and
- Exports.

CGA is supportive of reforms that deliver broad but simple legislative and regulatory provisions so that biosecurity risks are managed efficiently, effectively and at minimum cost. We also need to be aware of the ramifications of any new administrative arrangements as the new framework is implemented.

CGA believes that the framework which underpins our quarantine and biosecurity arrangements must be based on sound science and sensible policy. The quarantine and biosecurity arrangements must be adequately resourced to protect Australia's environment, biodiversity and agricultural production systems from exotic pests and diseases on a national, state and territory, regional and local levels.

For this to occur the Federal government should look to increasing the funding into this area not as we seem to see a cutting back of resources and a move to a full user pays system as we have seen in the inspection area and export areas.

The Federal Government needs to look at its level of Community Service Obligation in this area as it does for other areas of government such as health, education and the environment and border security for general issues and the industry members will be happy to cover costs related to individual businesses as we currently do.

The maintenance of our quarantine status is vital for domestic production and domestic interstate trade and also for current and future export opportunities, new market access and market improvement on global markets.

While the Government has obligations under the WTO, our Board and others believe we should not lower the bar to the lowest level.

For this reason CGA would request that the Australian Government should:

- Fully fund an increase staff and resourcing in this area to implement and manage the new systems for both imports and exports for the next 10-20 years as it has done for other key initiatives such as the environment.
- Look to use the highest level of ALOP's and even adopt the Tasmanian ALOP's as the level to review imports requests but have a process that speeds up IRA's to a range of timeframes say 3 months, 6 months, 9 months and 12 months depending on the issues to be looked at. CGA has raised this in other submission to the government and the Department of Agriculture.
- Declare regions that have special quarantine measures and regional differences due to being pest free etc. that prevent some products even though they have been approved by the Federal Government not being allowed into various areas with out convening WTO obligations. The one size fits all does not suit the continent of Australia and the Federal Government in conjunction with the State and Territory jurisdictions should work together to ensure this occurs and can be flexible to changes over time.
- Continue to consult and communicate fully with all relevant industries over time on importation and export issues, particularly with new technologies available; and
- Brands be they based on various levels such as Australian, State, Regional, local or farm based are a key to domestic and export sales and we need to have a system that can be able to allow for this to occur and back that up with a strong biosecurity and quarantine system.
- The Australian Cherry Industry has developed a Biosecurity Management Programme, see summary attached, that also looks at Pest Free Places of Production and Areas of Low Pest Prevalence as a way forward especially linked to Fruit Fly management, monitoring and trapping to show smaller areas are not affected by the these that in turn will allow for more exports and use of endpoint treatments if needed.
- For these to become a reality we need stronger cooperation between the Federal Government, State and Territory jurisdictions, regional bodies, local government and industry. The recent report from the Plant Biosecurity CRC on National Fruit Fly Research, Development and Extension Plan would highlight areas that need to be looked at linked to the National Fruit Fly Strategy.

The Australian Cherry Industry Strategic Plan 2012-17, highlights the need to expand our industry and to do that we must ensure we have a strong national biosecurity system that ensures we don't have disease outbreaks through importation of unsuitable products that could dramatically affect our industry.

Also we need to ensure we can grow our domestic markets and expand and maintain our exports market access through biosecurity related technical market access and market improvement processes and multi-lateral, regional and bilateral negotiations especially as the Australian cherry industry wants to grow our exports from 28% to 50 % of our annual production and able to supply into the range on markets in Asia/ India, Middle East and Europe so over 40 markets.

We have a key advantage in being able to fly our product into markets, both regulated and unregulated by phytosanitary protocols, globally within 72 hours. This however is complicated by the issues I have raised above in relation to Fruit fly, so we need to ensure we have a level playing field for all cherry exporters in all regions into the future.

We need a streamlined systems approach for this to occur from the orchard to the market place and the Australian biosecurity framework is a key component of that and we look forward as an industry to working with Australian Government in this areas so we can have a strong an viable industry and other in the horticulture area.

The CGA Board would like to request to present a verbal presentation to the Senate Standing Committee if you are undertaking such a process in 2015?

If that is the case please get in contact with the CGA Chief Executive Officer, Simon Boughey.

Simon has already attended four workshops run by Department of Agriculture over the past few years on the matter and put many of these points forward already in other consultations between 2012 to 2014.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Smith  
National President  
Cherry Growers Australia