



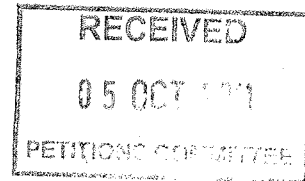
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THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP

MINISTER FOR TRADE

20 SEP 2011

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear ~~Mr~~ Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2011 advising of a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding the importation of potatoes from New Zealand.

The Government is committed to maintaining Australia's animal and plant health status. Our trade in food and agricultural products is underpinned by a rigorous biosecurity regime based on the latest scientific information and standards.

Under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement), Australia is free to set its own Appropriate Level of Protection and to put in place measures to guard against the entry, establishment or spread of pests and diseases. The SPS Agreement requires that all quarantine measures must be based on scientific evidence. This provides a framework to guard against WTO Members putting in place restrictions that would arbitrarily restrict trade.

Officers in my department are in regular contact with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) on this matter. DAFF has advised that Biosecurity Australia will soon commence a formal review of the import policy for potatoes from New Zealand. As part of this review, Biosecurity Australia will publicly release the draft import conditions and stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide comments and submissions. I encourage you to be part of this process and to follow the development of the review through the Biosecurity Australia website www.daff.gov.au/ba.

Thank you for bringing your views to the attention of the Government.

Yours sincerely

Craig Emerson