



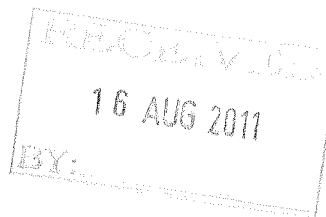
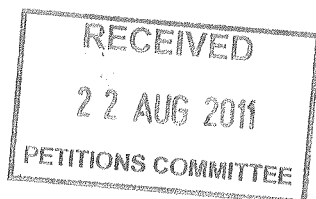
478/790

The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Member for Eden-Monaro

REF: MNMC2011-07681

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 31 May 2011 to Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, forwarding a petition to the Standing Committee on Petitions requesting a stop to the importation of potatoes from New Zealand because of concerns around the disease 'zebra chip'. Minister Ludwig has asked me to reply on his behalf. I regret the delay in responding.

The Gillard Government is committed to a strong biosecurity system to protect Australia's enviable biosecurity status, which contributes to Australian agriculture's comparative advantage.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry completed a pest risk analysis for the bacterium *Candidatus Liberibacter psyllauros* and its vector the tomato-potato psyllid in 2009. The *Final pest risk analysis report for "Candidatus Liberibacter psyllauros" in fresh fruit, potato tubers, nursery stock and its vector the tomato-potato psyllid* was publicly released after stakeholder comment in September 2009. The report included an assessment of potatoes as a host and recommended that potatoes be allowed into Australia subject to a condition that they are processed in quarantine-approved premises.

The department has flagged that it will formally review the import policy for potatoes for processing from New Zealand during 2011, and Biosecurity Australia has advised that the start of the review is imminent. The department's reviews of import policy are conducted in a transparent manner, and regular updates are available on its website at www.daff.gov.au/ba. You may wish to register as a stakeholder and receive notice of when the policy review for potatoes for processing from New Zealand begins, as well as notices of other new policy reviews.

I note the petitioners' request to reject the application for market access for New Zealand potatoes. However, I do not consider it appropriate for Minister Ludwig or me to interfere in the process of conducting science-based risk assessments on market access requests.

Yours sincerely

MIKE KELLY

15th August 2011