

Senate Review of  
Australia's Quarantine Function

---

SUBMISSION BY:

**TASMANIAN  
APPLE & PEAR GROWERS  
ASSOCIATION INC**

**ON BEHALF OF  
THE TASMANIAN INDUSTRY**

August 2002

---

TASMANIAN APPLE & PEAR  
**TAPGA**  
GROWERS ASSOCIATION INC.

# CONTENTS

---

## **BACKGROUND**

TASMANIAN APPLE & PEAR GROWERS ASSOCIATION INC

EARLY HISTORY

RECENT HISTORY

TASMANIAN INDUSTRY TODAY

## **INDUSTRY CONCERNS**

CROP SUSCEPTIBILITY & POTENTIAL IMPACT

IN THE EVENT OF INTRODUCTION TO TASMANIA OF PLANT  
DISEASE SUCH AS FIRE BLIGHT

CONSULTATION

IRA PROCESS

AQIS & QUARANTINE FUNCTION REVIEWS

## **CONCLUSION**

# BACKGROUND

---

## **Tasmanian Apple & Pear Growers Association Inc (TAPGA)**

TAPGA is a non-profit industry Association managed by a voluntary Board elected by growers. TAPGA represents approximately 180 growing families in Tasmania and has a joint office with the Tasmanian Abalone Council Ltd also a non-profit industry Association.

## **Early History**

The first apple tree was planted on Bruny Island by Captain Bligh in the 1700's. Apples were among the first crops introduced to Tasmania by the early settlers. These were initially planted around the homesteads as "house orchards", being part of a near subsistence economy. From the 1820's onwards an ever increasing surplus was exported to the mainland colonies. By 1860 (the first year of detailed statistics) there were 120 varieties of apples produced in Tasmania - mostly concentrated in the urban and suburban fruit gardens of Hobart and Launceston. The largest concentration of orchards in 1860 was in the Launceston area. The Huon was of minor importance with only 3% of the total crop.

In the period from 1860 to 1890, the ravages of the codling moth caused the re-orientation of fruit production in Tasmania from the northern to the southern areas and materially hastened the development of commercial orcharding. It is very significant that the non-infested Huon Valley became the leading commercial producer, while the heavily infested urban fruit gardens of Hobart and Launceston lapsed into relative obscurity. By 1883 there were 552 orchards in the Huon which gave the district a dominant position with respect to both total production and the quality of its fruit.

The initial stimulus for the emergence of specialised commercial apple growing in Tasmania were the good prices obtained in colonial markets in the 1870's and early 1880's. A much greater incentive was the beginning of successful apple shipments to UK in 1876 (although small lots had been shipped unsuccessfully as early as 1828). This became even more important when mainland colonies started imposing tariffs on Tasmanian apples to protect their local growers.

Overseas exports were aided by two developments in the 1880's - firstly a regular steamship service between Britain and Australia and secondly the adoption of refrigeration. Trial shipments were made to California, British Columbia, Syria, India and Ceylon. The first shipments to Germany were made in 1901. With the Act of Federation in 1901, all inter-colonial duties and tariffs were removed and interstate trade increased to over one million boxes annually.

The boom in commercial plantings reached a peak in 1915 when Tasmanian orchards contained 4,420,000 apple trees of which 1,765,000 were non bearing. The major cause of the sharp fall in new plantings was World War I. During the short lived recovery in the 1920's exports from Tasmania reached three million cases (in 1923). However this was followed by the British general strike in 1926 and in 1929 by the general depression in world trade. There was growing competition from North American fruit and also other southern hemisphere producers such as South Africa, New Zealand and Argentina.

In response to the depressed Commonwealth trade, the Ottawa Conference in 1932 established protection for Commonwealth apple exports. However a flooded market

in 1934 necessitated the introduction of a system of voluntary restrictions of Australian apple exports up until the outbreak of the second world war.

## **Recent History**

In recent years the Tasmanian apple crop has stabilised at around 3 million boxes (55,000 tonnes). The 1994 crop had a gross value of \$40 million.

The Tasmanian Apple Industry reached peak production in 1964 with 8.9 million boxes. Exports (mainly to Europe) peaked in the same year at 6.5 million boxes. In the decade 1960/61 to 1970/71 many part time orchardists and orchardists with only a small area of orchard, left the industry. The removal of these orchards was balanced by new plantings so that the total area was maintained at about 7,600 hectares. Total production was maintained around 7.7 million boxes as was exports of around 4.5 million boxes despite the devaluation of the pound sterling.

The next decade 1970/71 to 1980/81 saw major changes in the industry. The entry of the United Kingdom into the EEC in January 1973, had a major impact on Australian trade; Australia lost its preferential access to the UK market. Over-production of apples and pears in EEC countries, combined with the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC, gave little prospect of continued exports at existing levels to the UK/European area.

Australia revalued its currency, and also removed a tax exemption on the use of fruit juice in non-alcoholic beverages. Inflation caused costs to rise to the detriment of the fruit grower. This applied especially to freight rates to Europe. The freight rate per box (18 kg) was \$1.53 in 1961. It slowly rose to \$2.05 in 1970, but quickly rose to \$2.92 in 1973 and to \$4.74 in 1976.

A fruit growing Reconstruction Scheme (Tree Pull) enabled growers in financial difficulties to leave the industry. During this decade nearly 700 orchardists left the industry which more than halved the orchard area from 7,628 to 3,026 hectares and halved the production to 4.2 million boxes. Exports fell dramatically to 1.6 million boxes.

The Tasmanian Apple and Pear Marketing Authority (TAMA) came into being in 1977. With exports restricted to opportunity markets, growers had to look to mainland Australia. With the introduction of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES) in 1978, Tasmanian growers could profitably compete on the mainland. However, this market required a different varietal mix preferring Red and Golden Delicious. To assist the growers to change their varieties the Orchard Adjustment Scheme was introduced in 1981 until 1984.

The abolition of TAMA in 1982, marked the end of large overseas exports. With the disastrous 1981 export season TAMA lost in excess of \$7 million on 1.5 million boxes of fruit. The phasing out of Stabilisation and Supplementary assistance saw exports overseas fall to only 360,000 boxes in 1984. They have since recovered to over 1 million cartons in 1995/96.

## **Tasmanian Industry Today**

The Tasmanian apple industry has a gross value of \$70M to the State producing around 3 million cartons or 55,000 tonnes annually. Employment runs at approximately 1000 regular direct employees and a substantial number of seasonal and/or casual workers.

The Tasmanian industry accounts for approximately 18% of the total Australian production and 65% of the total of Australian apple exports. Tasmania has recently gained access to the Japanese market which is currently worth approximately \$2Million annually to the industry with growth potential of up to 50% per year for at least the next ten years. This market could potentially be worth \$20M to Tasmanian growers in the future. TAPGA has Approved Body status under the Export Market Development Scheme.

The major growing regions in Tasmania are located in the Huon Valley down to Geeveston in the south; Spreyton in the North West and the Tamar Valley in the North. Several varieties are grown in Tasmania – Fuji, Jonagold, Red and Golden Delicious, Braeburn, Gala and Pink Lady are the major varieties.

Pears are grown both in the South and North of the State with 1400 tonnes produced annually. Major varieties are Buerre Bosc, Packhams, Comisse & Josephine. Winter Cole is a regional variety in the South and in high demand.

The Tasmanian industry exports apples to over 20 countries and only recently gained access to the Japan market for one variety based mainly on the disease free status of the industry. Tasmania has *Fruit Fly Free* status

The industry sources the majority of packing materials, ie cartons, trays etc from at least three companies who have substantial facilities located in Tasmania, eg Amcor, Visyboard and Hawk Packaging and who all rely heavily on the apple and pear industry for their own continued viability within Tasmania.

There are numerous other organizations relying on the sustainable future of the apple and pear industry for their own future sustainability and a sample are listed below –

Transport Companies such as Edwards Transport (TOLL)

Fuel Companies

Nursery suppliers

Beekeepers

Spray & Fertiliser companies such as Tasmanian company – ServAg

Pallet suppliers

The Cascade Beverage Company currently only use Australian apples in juice production.

Most importantly are the people and small business operators located within the growing regions that all rely heavily on the industry for employment and as their key customer base.

The economic impact on the growing areas and for the whole State in the event Tasmania's crop was subjected to an imported virulent disease such as fire blight would be enormous – for example, approximately \$13M in direct industry wages are currently injected into the Tasmanian economy – this alone would be lost almost

completely and within a very short space of time, creating a significant downturn in employment and economic stability throughout the State particularly when coupled with the growing families themselves and the indirect impact to those groups reliant on the industry.

At present the industry is being requested to respond to a document using science and/or international standards. In this case it is expected that we should respond to the protocol developed in the IRA and the cost of this response is to be met directly by the Apple and Pear Industry.

The Industry has also been asked to organise meetings of its growers for briefings from AQIS. This further adds to the cost in time and resources of all growers.

# INDUSTRY CONCERNS

---

## **Crop Susceptibility & Potential Impact of introduction of serious diseases such as Fire Blight**

Tasmania's climate with the majority of the annual rainfall occurring during the Spring period makes the state particularly susceptible to the establishment and ongoing infection of Fire Blight.

Also of concern is the vulnerability to Fire Blight of two new varieties of apples namely Pink Lady and Jonagold which have been extensively planted throughout Tasmania's main apple producing regions.

The risk is even more accentuated with most new planting's grown on M26 rootstocks which are highly susceptible to Fire Blight.

It is estimated that if Fire Blight was to become established in Tasmanian orchards that there would be up to 30 % of production lost to this disease within 5 years.

## **Consultation**

Genuine consultation has not been available to industry on developing the IRA for New Zealand's application for access of apples. The process should have been open and transparent and conducted within a consultative framework utilising International Standards and guidelines.

The Draft should not have been released publicly without proper prior consultation with Industry. In fact the Senate Enquiry on Salmon recommended against open publicity of Draft IRA's.

The subsequent development of the RAP committee has gone some way to improving the problem of consultation.

## **IRA Process**

With "International Standards" being a key basis for any protocol or risk analysis, AQIS would be expected to source the most relevant documentation available. Proper due diligence would require the original IRA (1992) with full details to be used as reference and be included in the document.

Consultation with Japan and studying their protocols prior to the release of the Draft IRA would also be a logical expectation.

Industry has only sixty days to respond to a document that has taken AQIS nearly two years to complete.

## **Environmental Issues –**

In our experience with the New Zealand application there has been no evidence that even basic due diligence was undertaken by AQIS on the potential effects of fire blight on the environment. There is at least one native Australian rosaeca plant on the

endangered list and no scientific analysis has been carried out on the affects of Fire Blight on other native species.

### **AQIS & QUARANTINE FUNCTION REVIEWS**

Since 1996 there have been annual or two yearly reviews of Quarantine and or AQIS functions and also a report from Professor Nairn.

The Tasmanian industry has participated in all of these reviews by way of correspondence, verbal discussion, formal submission and attendance at meetings interstate. In addition, the Australian President who is also CEO of Tasfresh International located in Hobart has spent many hours communicating with Minister's offices and AQIS in addition to attending Audit meetings in Melbourne on industry's behalf.

The following points are made in relation to the previous reviews -

1. Several attempts have been made to have Review Committees meet in Hobart with the local Department, horticulture industry exporter and grower/producer representatives. Only 2 such meetings have been held in the past 6 years - one with Professor Nairn and one with only one AQIS representative.. There were no actions taken from either of these two meetings.
2. Subsequent to appointment of Mr Murray Rogers as Chairman of QEAC, contact was made by Mr Baddiley seeking a meeting and the indication was that a meeting was imminent. At the same time Mr Rogers was asked about the process for applying for an industry representative to fill one of the vacant positions on the Board. No response has been received on either matter.
3. Previous submissions and recommendations from industry to the various Reviews have resulted in no outcomes and no actions have been taken. (Copies of relevant correspondence attached for information).

### **Conclusion**

In regard to Import Risk Analysis, the apple and pear industry strongly believe the issue for AQIS should be first and foremost about Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection and the science that supports any protocol that achieves this. In addition, the risk analysis methodology should always be consistent and transparent with genuine industry consultation.

TAPGA, on behalf of Tasmanian Apple & Pear Growers would like to re-submit correspondence that was lodged in March 2000 detailing concerns in regard to AQIS New Inspection and Work Instructions (attached). This correspondence also includes suggestions for resolving the concerns raised. There has been no satisfactory response to this correspondence to date.

Although the industry has contributed to each of the Quarantine Reviews, the value of continuing to contribute is questionable when no outcomes or actions are forthcoming and issues raised have remained unresolved on each occasion.

Quarantine is of extreme importance to all Australian exporters of Agricultural products. Tasmania has unique circumstances that warrant careful consideration, particularly relating to its apple and pear industry.



Tasmania accounts for 65% of all Australian apple exports. The success of the Tasmanian industry in export markets has been largely due to the promotion of our clean, natural image and further supported by the disease free status, particularly fruit fly free status. Tasmania exports to destinations with some of the most difficult and strictest import protocols in the world and we have achieved an excellent reputation for its management of related quarantine controls.

AQIS in Tasmania work closely with industry to ensure that the disease free status is maintained. Tasmania being an island state potentially poses additional quarantine risks. In addition, within a few months there will be two passenger and vehicle ships running between Victoria and northern Tasmania on a regular schedule and whilst this is a positive step for the state's tourism it will mean extra detection and prevention work for Quarantine Officers.

The Tasmanian Apple & Pear Growers Association support the current system in Tasmania where the domestic and international import/export inspection services are provided by the one group, Quarantine Branch, DPIWE. However industry are mindful resources available to undertake this work can sometimes be quite stretched. In an important area such as Quarantine control, industry believes that adequate resources should always be available as a priority.

Mark Salter  
**TAPGA President**