

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2006

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BioSecAus 01

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Funding for IT system improvements

**Hansard Page:** 5 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Perhaps we could have on notice the details of the system improvements you are expecting to fund out of this initiative just to get an idea of the work you are undertaking.

**Answer:**

Biosecurity Australia (BA) has developed an information management strategy that incorporates improvements to BA's information management processes, including information technology system improvements.

The strategy includes the development of more integrated systems and processes to better monitor and track the interaction between BA and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service in relation to risk analyses of import proposals and the provision of policy advice.

The system improvements will also include making BA documentation more accessible to the public and stakeholders in electronic form, electronic storage of scientific reference material and improvements to the BA Stakeholder Register.

**Question:** BioSecAus 02

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Uncooked chicken meat import risk analysis (IRA)

**Hansard Page:** 6 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

In the lead-up to this stage, you expect that there would have been extensive consultation, and that is what you have intimated in your earlier answers. Is it possible to get a document which sets out that process and advises who has actually been consulted to date?

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**Answer:**

Consultation for the chicken meat import risk analysis (IRA) has included:

December 1998:	advice to all stakeholders on commencement of IRA and consultation arrangements
October 1999:	advice to stakeholders and consultation on proposed IRA team membership
April 2000:	IRA team membership confirmed, appeal opportunity
September 2000:	progress report
July 2001:	release of Issues Paper, nine responses received
September 2001:	meeting with industry on Issues Paper
May 2002:	progress report
December 2002:	progress report
January 2003:	release of Methods Paper
May 2003:	meeting with industry on Methods Paper
July 2004:	update on IRA work program
August 2004:	update on IRA teams
April 2006:	Revised IRA team membership

Information has been provided to registered stakeholders, including key poultry industry groups, through policy memorandums and placed on Biosecurity Australia's website.

**Question:** BioSecAus 03

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Uncooked chicken meat import risk analysis (IRA)

**Hansard Page:** 6 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Where are Dr Turner and Dr Gilchrist based?

**Answer:**

Dr Turner is based in Victoria and Dr Gilchrist is based in New South Wales.

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**Question:** BioSecAus 04

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Biosecurity Australia's visit to the Philippines

**Hansard Page:** 8 (25/05/06)

**Senator Hogg asked:**

When was your last visit?

**Answer:**

The last visit to the Philippines by representatives of Biosecurity Australia was on 2-3 December 2004 in Davao and Manila. The delegation held discussions with Philippines officials on a range of technical market access issues, including the banana risk import analysis (RIA).

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**Question:** BioSecAus 05

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Negotiations for draft protocol

**Hansard Page:** 14 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Who was involved from the industry?

**Answer:**

Industry members (affiliations in parentheses) were invited to participate in several telephone hook-ups\*, during the period 1 July 2005 to 21 February 2006.

Industry peak bodies were represented by: Heather Chong (President of Summer Fruits Australia), Ian Hay (President of Cherry Growers of Australia), Jamie Craig, (Australian Kiwifruit Growers Association; Nashi Pear Growers Association), Jeff Scott (Australian Table Grape Association), John Webster (Horticulture Australia Limited – HAL), Mark Chown (President Australian Citrus Growers), Judith Damiani (Australian Citrus Growers), Maxwell Summers (Australian Horticulture Exporters Association), Richard Dow (HAL), Stephen Winters (HAL; Horticultural Market Access Committee), Tony Muggeridge and Wayne Prows (HAL).

Other industry representatives were: Alan Jenkins (exporter), Alastair Scott (citrus, stonefruit), Andrew Prentice (various commodities), Brian Ceresa (stonefruit), Chris Simpson (Queensland citrus representative), David Holman, Davis Minnis (stonefruit, cherries), Dominic Cutri (stonefruit), Gary Esterman (stonefruit), Glynn Ward (Agriculture Western Australia), Hugh Molley (various commodities), Jamie Michael (various commodities), John Argiro (stonefruit), John Bailey (various commodities), Kevin Parr (various commodities), Michael Slim (cherries), Paul Schaffer (exporter) and Tim Reid (cherries, apples).

\* Some invited members were unable to participate in all meetings.

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**Question:** BioSecAus 06

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** USDA schedule-temperature regime

**Hansard Page:** 15 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

What order of temperature are we talking about?

**Answer:**

The difference in temperature and treatment times between Taiwan's current fruit fly treatment schedule and that proposed by Australia is **attached**.

**[BioSecAus 06 attachment]**

**Question:** BioSecAus 07

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Regional Difference

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Siewert asked:**

Is the principle of regional difference supported by Biosecurity?

**Answer:**

The principle of regional difference is strongly supported by the Australian Government.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Commonwealth and the States/Territories on Quarantine matters (1995, amended 2002) makes specific provision for the recognition of regional differences in pest status and risk.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BioSecAus 08

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Regional Difference

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Siewert asked:**

What administrative, or other guidelines, provide the requirement for quarantine procedures to recognise regional differences?

**Answer:**

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Quarantine, which is agreed between the Commonwealth and States specifies that the Commonwealth is committed to recognition of regional differences in pest status and risk.

Regional issues are regularly discussed in the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) and the Primary Industries Standing Committee, (PISC) and associated bodies. Council meetings often include discussion of issues relating to pest and disease risks and all Governments are committed to Australia's present quarantine regime. This regime already allows for regional differences in the pest and disease status of States/Territories where such freedom can be scientifically demonstrated.

Moreover, the administrative arrangements include state/territory regulatory frameworks to define and maintain state and territory plant health status which is underpinned by animal and plant health legislation and quarantine/regulatory agencies, interstate quarantine protocols, surveillance/inspections, certification procedures, lists of gazetted pests (including weeds) which is nationally coordinated through the Domestic Quarantine and Market Access Working Group (PISC/Public Health Committee working group).

The import risk analysis process has consultation steps specifically for the States/Territories relevant to their roles in the Quarantine partnership, in addition to their normal rights as stakeholders.

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**Question:** BioSecAus 09

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Australia

**Topic:** Regional Difference

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Siewert asked:**

To what degree does Australia demonstrate a high level of regional difference of pests and diseases in comparison with other members of the World Trade Organisation?

- a. Can you please table any maps or charts or data bases that show the regional differences for various agricultural products' pests and diseases in Australia?
- b. If this work has not been done can you table maps or other information showing the spatial distribution of major pests and diseases that effect agricultural production?
- c. For administrative purposes do regions of biosecurity follow State and Territory boundaries?

If not how are such regions determined?

**Answer:**

A comparative study with other members of the World Trade Organisation has not been undertaken by Biosecurity Australia (BA). BA approaches the consideration of regional differences on a case by base basis that is relevant to the particular commodity that might be subject to a quarantine risk assessment at that particular time.

Regional differences in pests and diseases exist in Australia as a consequence of Australia's size and geography. The current approach to addressing issues of regional differences in pest status and risk in Australia is based on scientific evidence, literature, and State/Territory information relevant to a particular import (or export) proposal.

A region can be a State/Territory, or a specific area (eg Sunraysia; Riverland).