



# Victorian Peach & Apricot Growers' Association INC

PO Box 39, 30A Bank Street, COBRAM, 3644 Reg# A 14923E  
President: Mr. James Cornish Secretary: Mrs. Barbara Coleman

23rd June 2004

Ms Maureen Weeks  
The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Room SG.62 Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Ms Weeks

**Ref: Proposed Importation of Apples from New Zealand**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Victorian Peach and Apricot Growers Association (VPAGA) to express our concerns about the proposal to import apples from New Zealand Revised Draft February 2004.

Our member growers produce significant amounts of pears and apples in the Cobram, Katunga and Invergordon areas of Northern Victoria and hence have a significant financial and family investment in pome fruit production.

VPAGA believes that the protocols proposed will increase our exposure and risk to Fireblight in particular and hence could lead to financial ruin for many of our member growers, particularly those heavily invested in the pear industry, if this incurable bacteria is introduced into our growing areas.

In our submission to the Draft Proposal by Biosecurity, we question the following proposed measures and phytosanitary procedures for Fireblight

- MAFNZ to provide assurance that apples are sourced from areas free of disease symptoms determined, for example, by surveillance;
- chlorine treatment of fruit; and
- cold storage treatment of fruit.

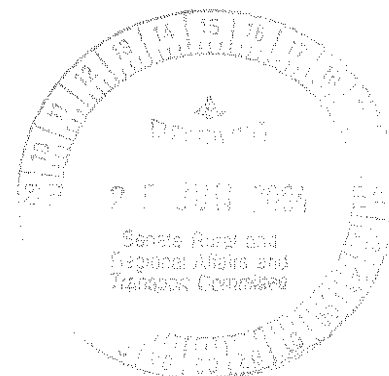
We do not believe that imports from New Zealand, or any other country which has Fireblight for that matter, should be allowed.

We firmly believe that the risks of importing apples from New Zealand in spite of the proposed protocols are too great. We reluctantly accept that we cannot have zero risk, but we have great difficulty accepting that protocols be put into place which will allow a marked increase in our risk of getting Fireblight, and hence the destruction of our family businesses.

Not being scientists, we had difficulty responding on purely scientific grounds, but one matter of principle in particular is of concern to us, and that is that an independent panel is not reviewing the draft proposal and the responses. It is unacceptable to us, that the very people who were responsible for the draft, should then be charged with reviewing the responses and making judgments on them.

According to the Draft Document to Import Apples From NZ on page 69 –

- the International Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) states that



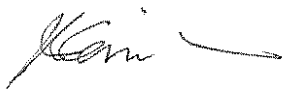
*Members shall take into account as relevant economic factors; the potential damage in terms of loss of production or sales in the event of entry, establishment or spread of a pest or disease; the costs of control or eradication in the territory of the importing Member; and the relative cost-effectiveness of alternative approaches to limiting risks.*

We contend that New Zealand does not have a successful pear industry because fireblight is endemic and uncontrollable in pears. Australia has a viable pear industry because of no fireblight. Surely the SPS Agreement requires the acknowledgement of the potentially devastating financial consequences to the importing country.

We believe that not enough weighting has been given to the potential damage that the introduction of Fireblight will do to the pear industry and associated enterprises in particular.

In conclusion, we firmly state to you that we believe that New Zealand apples should not be allowed into Australia under the proposed protocols.

Yours sincerely,



James Cornish  
President VPAGA