

Innisfail Office
8 April 2004

Ms Maureen Weeks
Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Room SG62
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Weeks

Re: Inquiry into import risk analysis for bananas from the Philippines

With reference to my request to appear before the Committee on the above matter and your advice that written submissions are accepted in the first instance, and then potential witnesses are chosen from among the submissions, I now submit the following information.

Banana farms were quarantined and given an order not to remove any bananas from their farms because they had been declared a quarantine area. After some months they were then told -

- There was a complete ban on the movement of bananas in the Tully Valley because of Black Sigatoka.
- After an enormous eradication campaign to the value of \$20m bananas were then allowed into Melbourne and Adelaide but not into Brisbane or Sydney.
- They were only allowed into Melbourne and Adelaide after an inspection of every tree and there was no black spot.
- Another condition they were allowed into Melbourne and Adelaide was if no bananas were grown in those states. They had to be non banana states.
- There had to be nil black spot on the leaves.
- They had to be certified by a Certified Officer who inspected every tree.

(2)

Question

Why are these conditions, which we were told were absolute in Australia, not imposed on bananas coming in from our proposed trading partners from the Philippines or any other country?

We understand that the focus of Biosecurity's Charter is to facilitate trade and protect our industries. Biosecurity is clearly placing all emphasis on facilitation of trade and none on the protection of Australian industries. This is wrong. Their motives must be questioned. They must be directed to put Australians first.

The protection of the banana industry in Australia will be the security of approximately 1,500 growers and 5,000 workers jobs and an injection of \$2m a week into the Innisfail and Tully economies. The \$400m banana industry is overwhelmingly based in Far North Queensland. It is unaustralian to put the interests of trading partners ahead of those of our own people. If our government feels any obligation to do this because of anything it has signed up for with the World Trade Organisation then it must reconsider that signing. To do something for a perceived "greater good" cannot be justified at the expense of a thriving industry and the interests of our own people. This government must put Australians first.

I submit the above points of view for consideration and resubmit my request to appear before the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Katter', with a long, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the right.

Hon Bob KATTER MP