

Position Paper - Biosecurity

The Issues and Our Position

The prevention of pest and disease incursions is of vital importance to the viability of our industry.

Australia's and the Northern Territory's relatively disease-free status, along with our reputation as a supplier of fresh, high quality, clean produce, must be maintained. Freedom from many of the world's major pests and diseases is a clear advantage in both domestic and global markets. Strong import quarantine protections are critical to the protection and sustainability of our agricultural production sector.

The majority of the Northern Territory's horticultural production is sold into interstate markets but there is an increasing focus on the development and expansion of export markets. Efficient and effective biosecurity systems between national and international jurisdictions that support and facilitate market access for our products are critical to the success of our farmers.

Strong preventative as well as reactive biosecurity risk management strategies are required for all commodity groups within the Northern Territory's agricultural sector. There is also a need for strong awareness and risk mitigation and management practices at the enterprise as well as industry level.

Industry needs to have confidence in the capacity of government agencies and regulatory authorities to effectively manage biosecurity events in a manner that is professional, competent, well communicated, and sensitive to industry and grower needs.

Our Commitment

NT Farmers will:

- Work with national and Territory partners to ensure that national biosecurity legislation and management practices protect our agricultural enterprises and facilitate effective and efficient access to national and international markets.
- Work to ensure that farmers in the NT are aware of biosecurity requirements and are informed and prepared for the mitigation and management of biosecurity risks by promoting to all growers the importance of biosecurity preparedness and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Provide an effective conduit between growers and biosecurity agencies during regional or commodity biosecurity incidents or at times of heightened biosecurity risk.
- Work with Territory and national partners to ensure that there is an independent review of the management of recent biosecurity events (particularly CGMMV) with a view to ensuring all learnings are captured and lead to systems and practice improvement for the benefit of industry.

Our Expectations

NT Farmers seeks and expects:

- Adequate resourcing of Department of Primary Industry biosecurity functions to ensure strong preventative and reactive NT plant industries biosecurity capacity.
- Grower focused engagement by government agencies and relevant industry bodies in respect of industry biosecurity planning, protection and incident management.
- Government agencies and industry bodies to engage with NT Farmers (early, frequently and with integrity and openness) on all biosecurity matters relevant to our members and industry.
- Government agencies to utilise NT Farmers as the critical conduit between incident managers and the grower community in the event of a biosecurity incident.
- Department of Primary Industry to regularly review and improve the efficiency of interstate market access arrangements for NT agricultural production and replace paper based practices with online facilities.
- Regulatory burdens to be reduced wherever possible through the recognition of farm suitable management quality assurance systems.
- An NT Farmers representative to be a participant in the formulation of all NT biosecurity response plans.
- Support for scheduled plant industry biosecurity simulations (risk response exercises).
- Strategies to address risks (such as the availability of products through the mail) by strengthening regulation and increasing awareness.
- The development of a comprehensive record of commercial plant growers.

Our Agenda Items

- Market access.
- Border protection.
- Awareness raising and education for industry participants.
- Strong industry capacity for incursion response and preparedness.
- Improved communication and engagement by Department of Primary Industry and other government agencies.
- Improved on-farm biosecurity protection through risk identification, assessment, mitigation and management strategies at commodity, farm and regional levels.
- Interstate certification agreement processes to be streamlined and put on-line.
- Compensation and eradication for pests and disease incursions.
- Adequate R&D efforts to ensure access to pest and disease controls in an environment of reducing chemical options.
- Project funding to support improved farmer preparedness for biosecurity incidents, improved awareness of national and Territory biosecurity management arrangements, and the implementation of strong and risk based on-farm biosecurity practices to ensure sustainable industry growth.