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Australia

Trade Policy Monitoring

Australia Issues Draft IRA Report for Apples from New Zealand

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Report Highlights:

On December 1, 2005 Biosecurity Australia issued a revised draft import risk analysis report (IRA) assessing an application from New Zealand to export apples to Australia. The extended comment period for the draft IRA closes on March 30, 2006. Establishing market access for U.S. apples to Australia is a high priority for USDA. In response to USDA's 2000 request that Australia initiate an IRA for U.S. apples, the Government of Australia has stated that it first intends to issue the final IRA for New Zealand apples, and access for U.S. apples would then be addressed through a modification of the New Zealand import policy.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Canberra [AS1]
[AS]

On December 1, 2005 Biosecurity Australia issued a revised draft import risk analysis report (IRA) assessing an application from New Zealand to export apples to Australia. The following is taken from the Biosecurity Australia website.

Begin Text:

The draft IRA report issued today proposes that the importation of apples to Australia from New Zealand could be permitted, subject to the following stringent quarantine risk management conditions:

- mandatory pre-clearance arrangements to occur before proposed export that require Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service officers to be involved in all risk management measures in New Zealand as well as auditing of the systems and processes used by New Zealand to certify exports;
- orchard inspection for freedom from fire blight symptoms – orchards with any visible fire blight symptoms would be disqualified from export;
- use of disinfection treatment (eg chlorine) in packing houses to prevent contamination of apples with fire blight bacteria;
- inspection of orchards during autumn or winter after leaf fall for freedom from European canker disease – orchards with any symptoms of European canker would be disqualified from export;
- inspection in New Zealand of a random sample of 3000 fruit for freedom from apple leaf curling midge – detection of apple leaf curling midge would result in rejection or treatment of fruit; and
- inspection for all other quarantine pests with remedial action.

The draft report proposes that New Zealand apples not be imported to Western Australia. No effective risk management measures have been identified for the disease apple scab, which is currently not endemic to Western Australia. This is consistent with the current practice that prevents apples being moved to Western Australia from eastern Australia, where apple scab is endemic.

Biosecurity Australia undertakes science-based risk analyses to assess the quarantine risks associated with applications to import agricultural and other commodities to Australia.

These analyses provide an important step towards keeping Australia free from pests and diseases that might be present in other countries. Risk management measures can be proposed to manage assessed quarantine risks to provide a high level of quarantine protection for Australia. These arrangements assist in the reduction of quarantine risk to a very low level, consistent with Australia's conservative approach to quarantine.

The *Revised Draft Import Risk Analysis Report for Apples from New Zealand* has been circulated so stakeholders can review the report, be consulted about its content and provide comments and submissions, particularly on scientific and technical issues.

Biosecurity Australia is providing all interested stakeholders with an extended comment period that will close on 30 March 2006. This allows 120 days for stakeholders to submit comments, compared with the usual period of 60 days.

This extended comment period takes account of the need for stakeholders to have sufficient time to absorb and comment on the very substantial and detailed material contained in the report's three volumes.

Biosecurity Australia is also mindful that many stakeholders are engaged in fruit harvesting during this time in both Australia and New Zealand. Biosecurity Australia also wants to ensure that stakeholders are not disadvantaged as a result of the seasonal holidays in both countries.

Biosecurity Australia and the IRA team have given careful consideration to some 200 submissions received on the previous draft report issued in 2004. The release of today's draft report also takes account of recommendations issued by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, which was finalised in March 2005.

The release of the report also gives effect to a commitment by the Australian Government in late 2004 that Biosecurity Australia would review and re-issue a draft report.

The draft IRA report is not a decision to allow the importation of apples from New Zealand. It is a draft report seeking comment from all interested stakeholders. The import risk analysis is concerned not just with the disease of fire blight, but also with a range of other quarantine pests and diseases that are present in New Zealand, such as European canker and apple leaf curling midge.

All submissions received on this draft IRA report will be taken into account by Biosecurity Australia before being reviewed by an Eminent Scientists Group. A final IRA report, together with recommendations for a quarantine policy determination, will then be provided to Australia's Director of Quarantine for consideration.

The *Revised Draft Import Risk Analysis Report for Apples from New Zealand* is available via the Biosecurity Australia website <http://www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au/>.

End Text.

In addition to files available in downloadable formats, a copy of the report can be obtained from:

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