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Australia

Agricultural Situation

Government Announces Review of Quarantine & Biosecurity Systems

2008

Approved by:

Kathleen Wainio, Agricultural Counselor
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Lindy Crothers, Agricultural Marketing Specialist

Report Highlights:

On February 19, 2008 Tony Burke, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, announced an independent review of Australia's quarantine & biosecurity systems. This will be the first major review of quarantine and biosecurity since the review by Professor Malcolm Nairn which was conducted in 1995.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Below is the text of a February 19, 2008 Media Release from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry announcing an independent review of Australia's quarantine & Biosecurity systems.

Begin text of media release:

Independent quarantine and biosecurity review launched

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke today announced details of a comprehensive, independent review into Australia's quarantine and biosecurity systems.

The Minister said he had appointed consultant and former secretary of the Department of Environment and Heritage Roger Beale AO to head the review and three other experienced panel members with specialist knowledge.

They are former Deputy Chairman of the Quarantine Export Advisory Council Andrew Inglis AM; a commissioner of the National Water Commission and former National Farmers' Federation Deputy Executive Director David Trebeck; and former Executive Director of the Australian Poultry Industries Association Jeff Fairbrother AM.

"The Rudd Labor Government is serious about delivering on this key election commitment, to ensure our biosecurity and quarantine arrangements are rigorous," Mr Burke said.

"As many people continue to feel the devastating impact of the equine influenza outbreak, we are determined to move ahead with this major review.

"Every farmer or business owner connected to our primary industries knows how important it is to protect Australia from disease.

"I have set detailed terms of reference for the review and have full confidence that the expert panel will investigate relevant issues thoroughly.

"I look forward to receiving the panel's report."

This is the first major review of quarantine and biosecurity since the former Labor Government commissioned a review by Professor Malcolm Nairn in 1995.

Mr Burke said he had asked the independent review to consider a range of issues including:

- the functions of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Biosecurity Australia;
- the effectiveness of import and export inspection and certification;
- the scope and adequacy of the current animal and plant quarantine arrangements; and
- previous reports on Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements.

The panel is due to deliver its report and recommendations to the Minister by 31 July 2008.

The independent panel review process will run separately to the commission of inquiry into the outbreak of equine influenza being conducted by the Hon Ian Callinan AC.

REVIEW OF QUARANTINE AND BIOSECURITY

Terms of Reference

Australia's biosecurity and quarantine systems operate on a science-based policy of managed risk with:

- an Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP) of very low but not zero risk;
- a 'continuum of quarantine' so that intervention measures progressively reduce risk through pre-border, border and post-border activities, and
- responsibility shared between the different layers of government, importers, exporters and the community.

These systems must serve to protect Australia's pest and disease status, consistent with community expectations and international obligations.

As such, it is vital that all operational arrangements are appropriate, effective and efficient. This includes the resourcing, legal, administrative and institutional frameworks that underpin, for example:

- animal and plant risk assessment
- targets for quarantine intervention
- import inspections and certification
- incursion response mechanisms, and
- roles of, and relationships between, the Australian, state and territory governments and the community.

In this context, the Australian Government has appointed an independent panel to review current biosecurity and quarantine arrangements, including but not limited to the functions of Biosecurity Australia and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

Specifically, the panel is to provide recommendations on the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of:

- *current arrangements to achieve Australia's ALOP;*
- *public communication, consultation and research and review processes;*
- *resourcing levels and systems and their alignment with risk in delivering requisite services; and*
- *governance and institutional arrangements to deliver biosecurity, quarantine and export certification services.*

In undertaking this review, the panel should consult with relevant domestic and international stakeholders and, where appropriate, benchmark Australia's arrangements in an international quarantine context. The panel should also have regard for the 1996 Nairn Review into quarantine, and other relevant reports.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will provide secretariat services, including appropriate scientific, technical, policy and administrative support.

The panel will provide a final report, including recommendations, to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry by 31 July 2008.

PANEL MEMBERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mr Roger Beale AO: Roger Beale is a Senior Associate with the Allen Consulting Group. He has extensive experience at senior levels in national economic and environment policy, as well as in corporate governance in the private and public sectors. He held Commonwealth department head level posts in the environment, transport and prime ministerial portfolios, and is currently Chair of the ACT Electoral Commission, Chair of the Advisory Board of the National Institute of Governance and a director of a number of major companies.

Mr Andrew Inglis AM: Andrew Inglis is a South Australian grain farmer, former Deputy Chairman of the Quarantine Export Advisory Council and a member of the 1996 'Nairn Review' of quarantine. He is the current Chairman of the Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre and is a former Chairman of Plant Health Australia. He has held a variety of positions in Australia's grain industry and was a member of the National Petroleum Advisory Committee and the National Dryland Salinity Board.

Mr David Trebeck: David Trebeck is a commissioner of the National Water Commission and was a member of the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group which prepared a long-term policy report for the Agriculture Minister in 2005. He is a former Deputy Executive Director of the National Farmers' Federation and has dryland mixed farming interests in the Lachlan catchment in south-western NSW. He is also a director of Graincorp, PrimeAg and Maersk Australia.

Dr Jeff Fairbrother AM: Jeff Fairbrother is a former Executive Director of the Australian Poultry Industries Association and the Australian Chicken Meat Federation. He has represented industry in a range of government and industry committees and has been heavily involved with the development of regulatory policies on animal health and welfare, food safety standards and quarantine and biosecurity matters.

End Text.

Recent Reports from FAS/Canberra

The reports listed below can all be downloaded from the FAS website at:
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/AttacheRep/default.asp>.

Report Number	Title of Report	Date
AS8002	Productivity Commission Invites Further Submissions to Pork Safeguards Inquiry	01/23/08
AS8001	Impact of Grain Prices on GOA Policy	01/11/08
AS7076	Productivity Commission Release Accelerated Report into Pigmeat Safeguards	12/21/07
AS7075	Bulk Wheat Export Applications	12/13/07
AS7074	Potato Report	12/11/07
AS7072	Ag Down Under Vol. 14	12/06/07
AS7071	GM Moratoria to be Lifted in Two States	11/29/07
AS7070	Cotton Quarterly Update	11/29/07
AS7069	Ag Down Under Vol. 13	11/26/07
AS7068	Fresh Deciduous Fruit Report	11/21/07
AS7067	Retail Sector Report	11/08/07