



**Australian Cherry Industry
Biosecurity Management Programme**

Australian Cherry Industry Biosecurity Management Programme - Summary - September 2014

Background

Australia produces some of the world's best cherries. While the majority of producers are multi-generational farming families with a strong passion for this delicate fruit, in recent years there has been exciting new investment within the Australian Cherry Industry from both local and overseas stakeholders.

Currently 25% of Australian cherries are exported to around 30 protocol and non-protocol countries in a highly competitive international market. The Australian Cherry Industry Strategic Plan 2012-2017 and Export Road Map 2012-2017 has indicated strong growth within the Australian Cherry Industry in the coming years, with annual production climbing to approximately 15,000 to 18,000 tonnes per season. This, combined with world class agricultural and manufacturing practices, with a focus on biosecurity safety, will allow growers and exporters to increase the quantity of Australian cherry exports to 50% of total national production.

A standout advantage for Australian cherries in the export market is the timing of our harvest period (October through to late February), which is counter-seasonal to northern hemisphere producers. Furthermore, the abundance of our airfreight capacity means Australia is in a position to supply freshly grown cherries that can be consumed within 48-72 hours from harvest. This delivery period is in stark contrast to some southern hemisphere producers who rely on sea freight that requires a total journey of 20-45 days. During this time period cherries lose a significant amount of flavour and quality. Currently 95% of all Australian cherry exports are transported by airfreight to non-protocol and protocol markets.

Fruit quality and biosecurity protection are paramount within the Australian Cherry Industry. It is our aim to provide international markets with superior fruit that is high in taste, colour and quality, but above all, the Australian Cherry Industry wants to ensure all our trading partners that

“Australian cherries are free from pests and diseases of quarantine concern”.

To do this, the Australian Cherry Industry will engage in a ***Biosecurity Management Programme*** to provide full confidence to all international markets that Australian cherries are not only of exceptional quality, but are also free from pest and disease and pests.

Within the Australian Cherry Industry, the Biosecurity Management Programme has the endorsement of all growers and exporters as the direction required to achieve our objectives of:

- Increasing exports to 40 - 50% of the annual crop by 2017-2020;
- Increased airfreight access as a priority to all importing markets;
- Ensuring there are commercially viable protocols in place; and
- Providing a tool that can be used by all stakeholders for the next 10 years in market negotiations and beyond.

Cherry Production Regions within Australia

The major cherry production zones in Australia are New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, with smaller production areas located in Western Australia and Queensland. Figure 1 demonstrates the main production areas by state (Cherry Growers Australia www.cherrygrowers.org.au). Across the cherry production regions, several areas are internationally recognised as Fruit Fly Pest Free Areas (PFAs). These are Tasmania, Sunraysia, Riverland and Riverina. In Victoria, the Yarra Valley has recently been designated domestically as a Pest Free Place of Production (PFPP).

The establishment of PFAs, PFPPs and Areas of Low Pest Prevalence (ALPP) can facilitate export for commodities that are associated with potential phytosanitary concerns. The advantages in establishing areas such as these include improved market access, increased marketability of the product, a reduction in pesticide use and the removal of post harvest end point treatments. Encouraging the development and maintenance of areas such as these will benefit the Australian Cherry Industry.

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Figure 1: Australian cherry growing regions.

Introduction to the Biosecurity Management Programme

The Biosecurity Management Programme (BMP) described in this report provides a holistic approach to the production of cherries within Australia. It is the goal of the Australian Cherry Industry to produce high quality fruit that is free from pest and disease. Moreover, as Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) techniques in farm and orchard management improve, the industry is shifting towards a more ecological and sustainable approach to cherry production through a Biosecurity Management Programme and implementation of a Systems Approach.

This report highlights the process and steps undertaken to qualify for market access and satisfy trading partners that:

“Australian cherries are free from pests and diseases of quarantine concern.”

To ensure the success of this approach, the Australian Cherry Industry will work and collaborate with the following team of stakeholders to ensure we have market access now and into the future. These are:

- **Growers** who are looking to export to protocol markets
- **Technical staff** and **agronomists** who assist in cherry production
- **Exporters** and **wholesalers**, both here in Australia and in the importing countries

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- **Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture** as lead research agency for cherry research and **other research bodies here and internationally**
- **State agencies** responsible for **Agriculture and Primary Industry** and who also may be part of monitoring and verification processes
- **Local Government** that may also be part of monitoring processes
- **Horticulture Australia Limited** and programs linked to export and trade shows
- **Federal Departments of Agriculture and Trade** for negotiation and linked to national strategies on Fruit Fly, biosecurity and working with the **Office of Horticultural Market Access (OHMA)** and **Horticulture Export Industry Consultative Committee (HEICC)**
- **Governments of importing countries** through negotiating and audits teams and officers.

It is well known that cherry production regions in Australia occurs across a variety of climatic zones that are associated with a varied risk of QFF and Medfly (a major phytosanitary concern of many trading partners). In this respect, it is the aim of the Australian Cherry Industry to propose a multipronged approach to provide full confidence that Australian cherries are free of QFF and Medfly, as well as all other pests and diseases of quarantine concern. Furthermore, adopting a BMP, which encourages prudent rather than indiscriminate chemical use, will reinforce Australia's clean and green image, and allay consumer concerns with respect to spray residues.

Fundamentally the BMP is based on internationally accepted verification procedures and systems approaches, with an additional pathway for providing end point treatments as a failsafe for suppliers who cannot meet the verification requirements (see Flow Chart). It combines control measures and checkpoints for ensuring cherries are free from pests and diseases of quarantine concern, and to provide a consolidated, demonstrated and qualified approach for expanding market access for cherries, regardless of the growing region in which it is produced.

As the situation currently stands, it is reasonable to expect that our long standing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and IPDM standards, as well as the non-preferred host status of fresh cherries (Andrew Jessup, *pers comm*) present an extremely low-level risk proposition to importing countries.

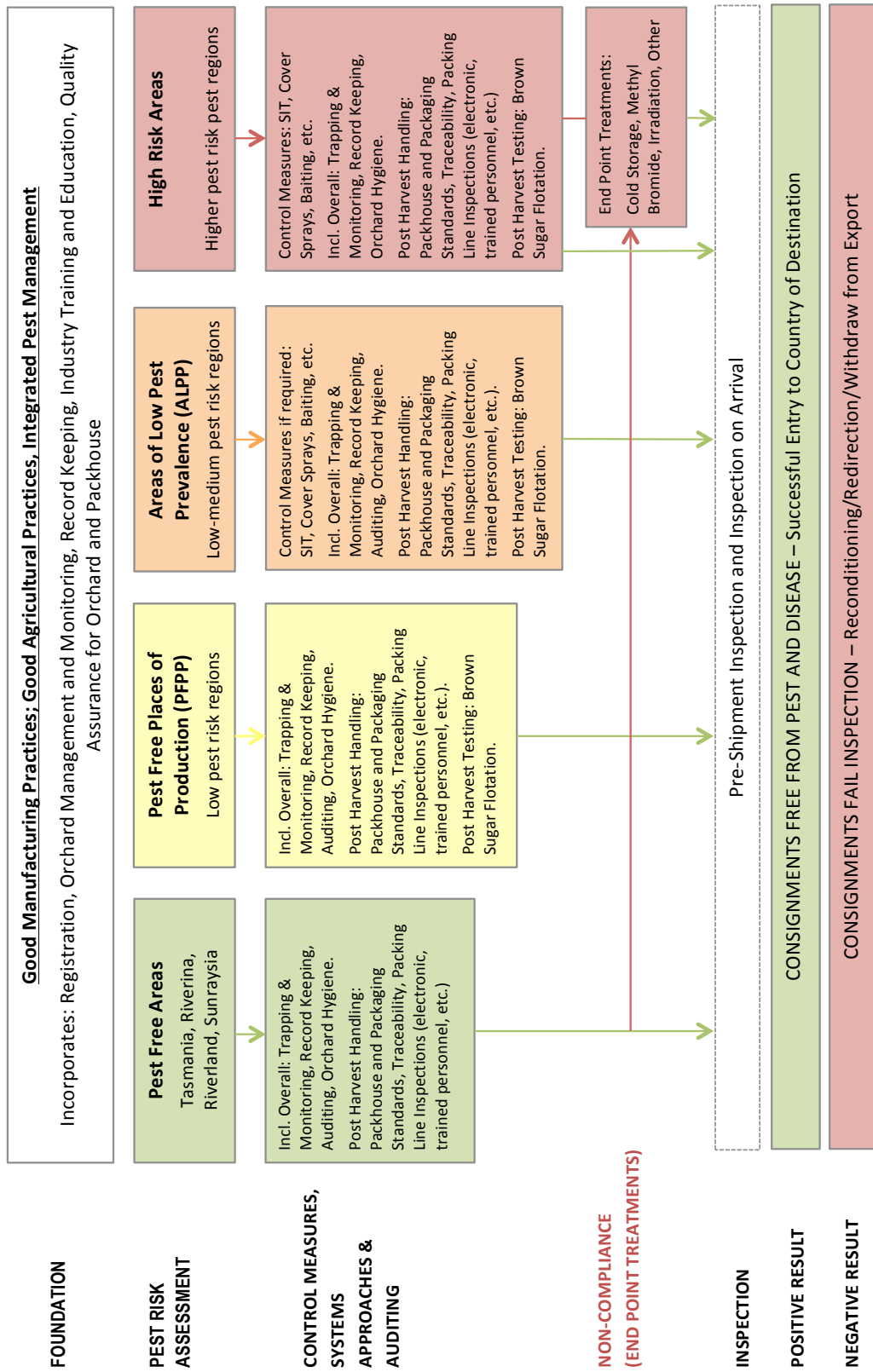
However, it is our desire to extend upon this to provide assurances that cherries from Australia are free from pest and disease and will not pose any quarantine threat to importing countries.

A Systems Approach within the Industry includes a series of integrated measures designed to meet the phytosanitary import requirements of trading nations and that can be adopted as an alternative to current end point treatments for cherries. Measures within the Systems Approach are undertaken both pre-harvest and post harvest and follow the recommendations outlined in ISPM 14: The Use of Integrated Measures in a Systems Approach for Pest Risk Management, and ISPM 35: Systems Approach for Pest Risk Management of Fruit Flies (Tephritidae). Pre-harvest measures include, but are not limited to, trapping programmes that conform to the National Code of Practice (COP) for the management of fruit flies and applying suitable preventative and/or control measures across regions and/or orchards (also following recommendations outlined in the COP for measures followed in the event for incursions or outbreaks). The pre-harvest measures for the management of fruit fly risk are in conjunction with an

all-encompassing IPDM approach surrounding all other pests and diseases of phytosanitary concern.

Post harvest measures include complying with GMP standards, inspection, sampling, testing and packaging standards to further verify the absence of pests and diseases. The goal of this approach is to ensure that Australian cherries are free from pests and diseases of phytosanitary concern.

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Steps to Achieving Biosecurity through a Systems Approach Pathway - Summary

1. Foundation

- 1.1. Registration with DOA (Orchards/blocks, Packhouses, Cold Storage Facilities)
- 1.2. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) standards.
- 1.3. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).
- 1.4. Quality Assurance Certification (HACCP, Freshcare, SQF or equivalent)

2. Orchard Monitoring and Controls

2.1. Orchard Management

- 2.1.1. IPDM - Cultural Practices – Hygiene and sanitation
- 2.1.2. Preventative Measures – Fruit fly baiting programmes

2.2. Monitoring of all Pests and Diseases of Concern (IPDM)

2.3. Monitoring of QFF and Medfly

- 2.3.1. Trapping: According to National Code of Practice. DOA approved officers to provide trapping and monitoring verification.
- 2.3.2. Pre-harvest visual inspection

2.4. Control Measures - Chemical: Auditable & up-to-date spray diaries.

2.5. Thresholds

- 2.5.1. All pests and diseases of concern: Annual audit the monitoring records for all pests and diseases of phytosanitary concern and comply with protocol requirements for the importing country.
- 2.5.2. QFF and Medfly: If thresholds are exceeded, orchard blocks are to be removed from export or default to an end-point treatment pathway only.

3. Post Harvest Handling and Packing

3.1. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) – Must comply with import protocols, and also includes compliance in product receipt testing, fruit traceability, grading and packaging compliance, packaging integrity, storage compliance and post-packaging sampling and inspection.

3.2. Export Packhouse Compliance Requirements

- 3.2.1. Quality Assurance certification (HACCP, Freshcare, SQF or equivalent) or as defined by the customer.
- 3.2.2. DOA approved Quality Managers must oversee packing.
- 3.2.3. A copy of the relevant workplans and MICoR document.
- 3.2.4. Understanding of the physical appearance and inspection procedures for pests and diseases of concern to the importing country.

3.3. Packhouse Orchard Compliance and In-line Inspection

- 3.3.1. Packhouse manager to validate registration and compliance records of registered orchards.
- 3.3.2. Visual inspections: Visual in-line packing inspection according to standards.
- 3.3.3. In-line sampling inspections: 2% or 600 unit inspections.
- 3.3.4. **Brown Sugar Flootation Testing:** Mandatory testing to detect for the presence of eggs and larvae of QFF and Medfly. Testing procedures to be conducted according to Industry standards.
- 3.3.5. If QFF or Medfly eggs/larvae are detected in cherries post harvest, registered orchard blocks shall be removed from export and DOA notified immediately.

4. Registered Export Establishments for Inspection and/or Loading

- 4.1. Registered export establishments must be kept in a clean and sanitary condition at all times. Records of hygiene and cleaning programs must be kept for verification purposes.
- 4.2. **Audits** – DOA or DOA approved officers to audit all registered premises before the season commences. All packhouses must provide documentation for grower registration, packhouse registrations and export registrations.

5. Final Pre-shipment Phytosanitary Inspection - All cherries intended for export to protocol markets shall be subject to a final inspection by DOA to verify the absence of the pests and diseases of quarantine concern.

6. Action for Non-compliance - If a consignment presented for inspection under a Systems Approach pathway is non-compliant, it shall be removed from export and an investigation initiated which may result in the suspension of the orchard/block for the season, or deregistration of the orchard for the season.

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