

05 March 2024

By email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Senator Matthew Canavan
Chair Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Greenlife Industry Australia Limited | ABN 59 634 584 017

Dear Senator Canavan

RE: Question on Notice to Greenlife Industry Australia RRAT RIFA Hearing 05/03/2024

Please find below the response from Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) to your 'Question on Notice' directed at GIA during the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (RRAT) RIFA hearing on Tuesday 5th March 2024. In the hearing I mentioned that there had not been an official and scientifically tested Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) completed for Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) at any stage over the past 23 years the pest has been in Australia.

A PRA provides an opportunity for the gathering together of technical and economic information, on a relevant pest organism, and to test and assess the knowledge (spread, hosts, survival, biology, etc), opinions, theories, and assumptions of a pest's impact on our economy, society, and environment. A PRA is undertaken for all biosecurity plant pests that are to be eradicated and/or have market access conditions imposed across jurisdictions, except for RIFA.

Both GIA and our sister state body, Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland, have lobbied the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) over many years to undertake said PRA to better inform their decisions and provide transparency around decision making. Unfortunately, this has never happened with the NFAEP making compliance decisions that lack transparent technical justification and impede trade and costs growers significantly. As a byproduct of these conditions in Queensland other states and territories have followed, all or some, of the conditions set by the NFAEP, for interstate trade creating a complex and costly regulatory environment for growers within the RIFA infested zones.

In March 2023 GIA requested Plant Health Committee (PHC), a committee under National Biosecurity Committee (NBC), to convene a one-day workshop to explore the plethora of issues surrounding RIFA market access conditions (intra and interstate) with one outcome being the agreed need for a PRA. The PRA was tasked to be completed by the Sub-committee Market Access Risk and Trade (SMART). Advice from PHC in November 2023 was the RIFA PRA would be completed in 2024.

Please feel free to seek answers from me to any queries you may have of the above.

Yours sincerely

John McDonald
Director RDE and Biosecurity
Greenlife Industry Australia

