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Committee Secretary
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Biosecurity Bill 2014 and Related Bills

Australian Pork Limited (APL) is the national representative body for Australian pork producers. APL is a producer-owned not-for-profit company combining marketing, export development, research and innovation and policy development to assist in securing a profitable and sustainable future for the Australian pork industry.

APL welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and related Bills ('the Bill'). APL is supportive of the Bill and is confident that it will improve the function of Australia's world-class biosecurity system.

APL acknowledges the difficulties faced by the Department of Agriculture in administering various components of the Australian biosecurity system under the century old Quarantine Act. In light of recent reviews, including the 2008 Beale Review of Australian Quarantine and Biosecurity, improved legislation in this area is certainly warranted.

Specific aspects of the Bill are addressed below:

Import Risk Assessment

APL attended a consultation on the proposed changes to the Import Risk Assessment (IRA) process. APL understands that as an IRA for pork is already in place, only future amendments may be considered to the existing IRA. Consequently, the pork industry is unlikely to be exposed to a full IRA in the future and therefore, APL has no comment on the proposed changes.

Inspector-General of Biosecurity

The introduction of an Inspector-General of Biosecurity (IGB) is a recommendation of the Beale Review, which APL supported. APL understand that the IGB has an internal audit function for the components of the biosecurity system administered by the Department of Agriculture.

In practice, an interim IGB has been appointed, and the Bill simply formalises this. APL is supportive of the establishment of the IGB.

Appropriate Level of Protection

The Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP) is a statement of risk-tolerance for Australia's biosecurity system ("*providing a high level of sanitary and phytosanitary protection aimed at reducing risk to a very low level, but not to zero*"). The ALOP is currently an administrative concept, and the Bill will legislate it. APL understands that a zero-risk ALOP is impracticable and supports the current ALOP, including its elevation into legislation.

Approved Arrangements

A source of particular support from APL are the new provisions concerning approved arrangements. APL is eager to see these how approved arrangements will operate in practice, and to explore potential linkages with the Pork Supply Chain Integrity Program. This program incorporates and integrates a number of established pork industry systems, including PigPass (the pork industry's traceability system), APIQ[✓]® (the pork industry's quality assurance system), and Physi-trace (the pork industry's rapid trace back system).

Emergencies

The Bill expands the Australian Government's ability to declare various biosecurity emergencies and zones. APL is concerned that, over time, this may see a shift away from state managed responses to national managed responses. For large multi-state responses this may well be a good outcome, but for smaller emergencies it might be a frustration, especially if the state in question wants to handle the response differently to the Australian Government. This could be a source of significant tension and confusion by those participating in or affected by the emergency.

APL has confidence in the existing arrangements (i.e. the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) as a funding model for cooperative state based responses) and hopes that these new powers will complement these arrangements rather than hinder them.

Subordinate Legislation

APL recognises that the detail surrounding the application of the legislation will be contained in the relevant regulations and other supporting documentation, which are yet to be released for public comment. Like the National Farmers' Federation and other groups, APL will continue to seek assurances that industry will be closely involved in the drafting of these documents.

Yours sincerely

Deb Kerr
General Manager, Policy