

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2014

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 190

**Division/Agency:** Plant Health Australia

**Topic:** National Fruit Fly Strategy

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator RUSTON asked:**

1. As of 20 November 2014, how many times has the National Fruit Fly Strategy Advisory Committee met?
2. What progress has been made with regard to the review of the 2008 National Fruit Fly Strategy (NFFS)?
3. The committee is supposed to be developing a new implementation plan by the end of the year. Will this deadline be met? What progress has been made?
4. Which industry bodies have attended meetings of the committee and are actively engaged in reviewing the NFFS and developing the new implementation plan?
5. Please provide an update of your progress on the following:
  - national standards for fruit fly disinfestation treatments;
  - the national fruit fly information portal – is it complete, who can use it, what is it supposed to be used for, and can a grower use it;
  - national standards for fruit fly management systems;
  - development and adoption of systems approaches for market access; and harmonisation of fruit fly interstate certification.
6. What progress has been made on the development of a coordinated national fruit fly awareness and communication strategy?
7. What level or degree of engagement does the committee have with regional groups – defined as groups representing one or more industries within defined regional areas?

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**Answer:**

The purpose of the National Fruit Fly Strategy Advisory Committee (NFFS AC) is to provide national policy oversight of the management of all fruit fly issues endemic and exotic, to identify areas where efficiencies in processes can be achieved and to identify opportunities for investment in research that have support from all stakeholders. In addition the NFFS AC will consider policy priorities for the management of fruit flies in the field, such as application of projects to support adoption of area wide management. This will assist all stakeholders facilitate an enhanced national strategic response to fruit fly incursions, support current market access and will contribute to improved access conditions and new market opportunities.

The project is funded to the end of September 2015. At that time a framework will be developed to allow stakeholders to continue with the activities developed by the NFFS AC. Discussions will be initiated with a range of groups to take ownership of the program post September 2015.

1. The National Fruit Fly Strategy – Advisory Committee (NFFS-AC) has held 1 preliminary meeting, a workshop with a wide range of stakeholders, 2 teleconferences and 2 face to face meetings during the period late May 2014 to 20 November 2014.

2. The committee has considered all the projects contained in the NFFS Strategy Implementation Plan released in 2010 and has agreed on those projects that have been completed, those that are partially complete and those that are no longer relevant. For each of the projects considered relevant a lead agency and a priority level has been assigned. The lead agencies have commenced work on their activities and an update on progress will be an agenda item at each meeting.

3. The implementation plan continues to evolve as new developments arise. The committee has considered all the projects from the previous Implementation Plan and assigned priorities and is also considering the portfolio of work being undertaken by Horticulture Innovation Australia (previously HAL) and the SITplus consortium.

In addition the committee considered the draft R&D plan developed by the Plant Biosecurity CRC (PBCRC) “National Fruit Fly Research, Development and Extension Plan Consultation Draft 2014”. PHA are taking the “endorsement draft” of the PBCRC document and mapping it against work undertaken by HIA to date, work being undertaken by the SITplus consortium (with funding for approximately \$22 million) and the activities already underway through the NFFS AC, to determine where gaps exist. This will be taken back to the advisory committee to seek endorsement of their priorities. This role for the advisory committee was outlined by the Minister for Agriculture in a July 2014 press release. The committee has had input into the plan, ensured broad consultation with stakeholders and has now commenced work to develop priorities for consideration by the funding bodies.

It was pleasing to see that the CRC’s RD&E Plan was consistent with issues raised in the original National Fruit Fly Strategy and its 2010 Implementation Plan.

Specifically there is not a newly developed implementation plan in place as the current one will be continuously modified to reflect new information and to accommodate changing priorities in fruit fly research and management needs. It is proposed that updated versions will be publically available on the National Fruit Fly Advisory Committee web site.

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4. The NFFS AC currently has three industry representatives. The industry representatives have been selected to represent a region in which a specific fruit fly status applies. One represents fruit fly free areas (South Australia and Tasmania). One represents areas in transition from freedom to a new state (the new status is still to be resolved) covering southern NSW and Victoria. The final representative covers the fruit fly endemic areas of northern NSW and Queensland. PHA has attempted to select a fourth representative from Western Australia, to cover Mediterranean fruit fly, but at this stage have not had success. The initial representative agreed to participate then withdrew due to personal and health reasons. After consultation another candidate was nominated and they indicated an interest but at this stage they have not confirmed or rejected the offer of a place on the committee. PHA has made numerous attempts to determine their position. The committee has benefited significantly from having industry representatives at the meetings. This committee provides one of a number of opportunities for government and industry to work collaboratively on issues of national significance for all aspects of fruit fly management across Australia. In fact one of the key deliverables for the committee has been to open these channels of communication and for all the participants to learn and appreciate the issues facing other members of the committee. Interstate or industry specific issues have not emerged as all members see the benefit to their stakeholders by taking a more national approach to this issue.

PHA also communicates with its industry members representing fruit fly affected commodities. One such communication channel is the regular Tendrils e- newsletter. Another is related to discussions centred around the Torres Strait Fruit Fly Containment Strategy.

5.

***National standards for fruit fly disinfestation treatments;***

Over the last few years there has been significant effort undertaken on updating national standards for fruit fly disinfestation treatments. Much of this has been sponsored by the Department of Agriculture in implementing their response to the Dimethoate/Fenthion review. For most treatments the domestic treatment conditions now align with the export and import rates applied by the Department of Agriculture. The state and territory governments have worked with the Department of Agriculture to ensure this alignment was implemented. The discussions on alignment were managed through the Subcommittee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access, independently chaired by PHA. This is a benefit to industry who can move

product domestically and internationally more readily. The NFFS AC is considering disinfestations in a broad context of what is important for industry e.g. new treatment methodologies for systems approaches or new market access treatments etc. This will be a focus for the committee at future meetings. Specific details can be sourced from the Department of Agriculture.

*The national fruit fly information portal – is it complete, who can use it, what is it supposed to be used for, and can a grower use it;*

The “National Fruit Fly Strategy Advisory Committee” web site is up and running. The URL for this site is <http://biosecurityportal.org.au/>

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There are three components to this site, a public area, a private area for members of the NFFS AC with the third area a private area where the committee can invite external people to join and comment on a topic. For example the committee could present information on priorities for systems approaches. The committee could then determine who they wanted to comment on the proposals and they would be invited to join the site. PHA as the administrator would then collate the comments and present them back to the advisory committee in a consolidated form for consideration. This part of the site could be used to gather information from regional industry groups or peak industry bodies as needed. It is intended this part of the site would be dynamic and vary as the priorities of the committee change.

The site does have a public part and at this stage information on the National Fruit Fly Strategy and Implementation Plan are on the site. It is intended to increase activity for this part of the site and to publicise it widely. PHA are recommending to the NFFS AC that the minutes from each meeting go onto the public site to enable industry and government to see what is being discussed. It is also envisaged this will generate comments from a broad range of stakeholders.

The biosecurity portal also offers access to the following sites:

- Fruit Fly and the Home Gardener website <http://preventfruitfly.com.au/>
- Quarantine Domestic website <http://quarantinedomestic.gov.au/>
- Subcommittee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access <http://domesticquarantine.org.au/>
- Fruit Fly Body of Knowledge <http://biosecurityportal.org.au/Pages/FFBokLanding.aspx>

PHA also hosts the SharePoint site for the Certification Services Working Group, a working group of the Subcommittee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access. This group develops the Interstate Certification Assurance (ICAs) conditions. A significant proportion of the work of this subcommittee involves developing ICAs for the interstate movement of fruit fly host products. Endorsed ICAs are placed on the Subcommittee on Domestic Quarantine and Market Access website list above.

***National standards for fruit fly management systems;***

A number of national standards were developed / revised during the Department of Agriculture's response in implementing their response to the Dimethoate/Fenthion review. A revised "Australian Code of Practice for Fruit Flies" has been endorsed by Plant Health

Committee (Plant Health Committee is a subcommittee of the National Biosecurity Committee). The new document restructures the previous document allowing for changes in practice for managing fruit responses and for monitoring fly numbers to be made more easily than was the case previously and the new Code accommodates new approaches such as pest free place of production, areas of low pest prevalence or systems approaches. Internationally signatories to the International Plant Protection Convention have endorsed a series of standards that relate specifically to fruit flies. The Department of Agriculture and state/ territory jurisdictions are working collaboratively to adopt these. The NFFS AC is also considering these initiatives to determine where priority should be placed. The last meeting of the committee considered four research proposals, which if agreed by regulators

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domestically and internationally, will lead to changes to the Australian Code. These changes will have a significant benefit to industry and government. Consideration of these by the advisory committee enabled industry, for the first time, to be involved in these discussions.

*Development and adoption of systems approaches for market access; and harmonisation of fruit fly interstate certification.*

There are already nationally endorsed system approaches for market access in place. In determining membership of the committee consideration was given to the work of one regional group in Queensland who have committed significant effort and resource into gaining acceptance of a systems approach in a fruit fly endemic area. The system has now been endorsed by interstate regulators. The committee see the continued development of systems approaches, considering them in their broadest sense, to be a key part of the work of the committee. At the last meeting of the committee significant time was devoted to trying to understand the breadth of options available and the complexity of gaining approval. This will be an ongoing area of interest for the committee. Adoption of new approaches is a priority for state and territory governments and for industry.

6. At the last meeting of the committee time was allocated to discussion on coordinated national fruit fly awareness and the development of a communications strategy. The committee agreed that the communications strategy needed to be broad to address the needs of all stakeholders including growers, regional bodies, peak industry bodies, researchers, policy group etc. The committee requested PHA and HIA to progress this matter and to bring a draft back to the next meeting. PHA has initiated this work but it is at an early stage of development.
7. The committee has engagement with the regional groups associated with the industry members of the advisory committee. All members of the committee recognised this level of engagement is insufficient and see the communication strategy being developed as the mechanism to ensure broader consultation is achieved.