Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 32

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy and Implementation Division

Topic: Risk profile on biosecurity

Proof Hansard page: 67

Senator GALLACHER asked:

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have a risk profile on biosecurity?

Mr Williamson: We work our whole operations based around assessing risk.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you know where your major risks are in biosecurity?

Mr Williamson: We certainly do

ACTING CHAIR: Does the $200 million investment address those major risks?

Mr Williamson: Yes

ACTING CHAIR: Can you table the risk profile?

ACTING CHAIR: What we would like you to table is a risk profile on biosecurity, which the department must have.

Answer:

The department manages biosecurity risk to ensure an appropriate level of protection for Australia – there is no one risk profile for biosecurity management. The profile of biosecurity risk the department uses is based on the pathways by which pests, diseases and weeds of biosecurity concern could enter Australia, become established and spread. For each pathway, the extent of risk is affected by the size (annual number of units such as mail items, passengers, cargo consignments and so on), the specific pests, disease and weeds that could be present on the pathway, and the consequences of any of those pests, diseases or weeds becoming established and widespread in Australia. The consequences include economic losses (productivity and trade), impacts on the environment and human health.

The department uses a model of the biosecurity system that assesses risk across all pathways, and considers the range of biosecurity controls the department applies pre-border, at the border and within Australia so that risk is managed to an acceptably low level.

Question: 32 (continued)

The following table lists the set of pathways for the entry of pests, diseases and weeds that form the biosecurity risk profile. Each pathway has well defined characteristics that determine the type and extent of biosecurity controls in place to reduce risk.

Question: 32 (continued)

Table 1. Pathways for the entry of pests, diseases and weeds of biosecurity concern to Australia.

1. Commodity based pathways
Feed: aquatic (fishmeal etc)
Feed: petfood
Feed: stockfeed
Fertiliser
Food: aquatic (seafood)
Food: beef
Food: chicken
Food: pork
Food: other meat
Food: dairy
Food: eggs
Food: seeds & nuts
Food: fruit & vegetables
Food: processed, animal origin
Food: processed, mixed origin
Food: processed, plant origin
Skins hides & feathers
Cut flowers
Timber
Machinery
Tyres
Live aquatic animals
Live bees
Live birds
Live dogs & cats
Live eggs
Live horses
Live lab & zoo animals
Live semen & embryos
Other live animals
Veterinary products
Nursery stock
Seed for sowing
Plants for laboratory research
Unaccompanied personal effects
Wood packing and packaging
Carnet (temporary import of goods e.g. travelling shows)
Mail
2. Movement based pathways
Passengers
Cargo Containers (excluding the cargo within)
Conveyances (sea going vessels and planes)
Defence (military operations involving movements of personnel and equipment)
3. Natural pathways
Natural means (wind and tide)
Torres Strait

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 33

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy and Implementation

Topic: Biosecurity risk matrix

Proof Hansard page: 68

Senator GALLACHER asked:

Mr Williamson: We have a risk matrix that the committee has seen many times.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry

Mr Williamson: The committee has seen the risk matrix.

ACTING CHAIR: I am asking you for it now. Can we have the biosecurity risk matrix

Mr Williamson: We can provide the risk matrix that we assess risks against.

Answer:

The department uses a formal methodology to assess biosecurity risk. This methodology is consistent with international guidelines and includes assessment tools, such as, a risk estimation matrix.

A risk estimation matrix is used by the department to combine the likelihood of a pest or disease entering, establishing and spreading in Australia with the potential consequences should that occur and whether specific risk management measures are required to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP). A list of pathways for the entry of pests, diseases and weeds that form the biosecurity risk profile has been provided in Question on Notice 32.

To reflect Australia's approach to biosecurity, a risk estimation matrix places emphasis on events that may have a 'high' consequence; the matrix is not symmetrical – it places more weight on events with a higher consequence.

An adapted form of Australia's risk estimation matrix is used as a basis by Plant Health Australia and by affiliated industries in their industry biosecurity plans.

Question: 33 (continued)

The risk estimation matrix:

Likelihood of entry, establishment and spread	Negligible	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
High	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk	Extreme risk
Moderate	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk	Extreme risk
Low	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Very low	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**	Low risk	Moderate risk
Extremely low	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**	Low risk
Negligible	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	Negligible risk	**Very low risk**

Consequences of entry, establishment and spread

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 34

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy and Implementation Division

Topic: Biosecurity

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator SIEWERT asked:

1. What is the status of the Panama outbreak in Queensland?
2. What is the status of the cucumber green mottle mosaic virus in Queensland?

Answer:

1. Panama disease Tropical Race 4 (TR4) was first detected in Tully, Queensland in March 2015. On 16 April 2015, the National Management Group (NMG) endorsed the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) recommendation that it is not technically feasible to eradicate the fungal pathogen *Fusarium oxysporum f.sp. cubense* that causes the disease. There remains only one infected property in Tully which is operating under strict biosecurity controls.

   To address the outbreak, the Queensland Government established the Response and Resilience Taskforce on 16 March 2015. This taskforce includes representatives from the Australian Government, Australian Banana Growers' Council and local government authorities.

   Once a disease has been deemed ineradicable, responsibility for management lies with the state government where the disease occurs. However, the Australian Government is providing over $1.2 million to the banana industry and the Queensland Government to support management actions and prevent further spread of the disease through the Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine Initiative. This includes contributing funds to affected growers for costs that they incurred while not being able to harvest and market fruit as a result of the initial emergency biosecurity measures put in place (funding breakdown at Attachment A).

2. Cucumber green mottle mosaic virus (CGMMV) was first detected in Australia in the Northern Territory in July 2014. It was first detected in Queensland on 17 April 2015 on a single commercial watermelon and pumpkin farm in Charters Towers, Queensland. The property is now operating under strict biosecurity controls. The NMG met on 3 July 2015 and agreed to close the CGMMV incident in Queensland due to the lack of consensus in determining whether CGMMV is an Emergency Plant Pest or technically feasible to eradicate.

Question: 34 (continued)

CGMMV is considered to be established and non-eradicable but is subject to an official control and containment program. It has not been officially confirmed elsewhere in Australia outside of Queensland and the Northern Territory.

To help growers manage CGMMV into the future, the department is working closely with affected industries and state and territory governments to develop a national plan for the management of CGMMV. This will provide a national approach to managing the virus, support safe domestic and international trade in cucurbits (the family of plants that include pumpkins and cucumbers) and minimise the impacts of the virus on plant industries. The CGMMV Risk Assessment Working Group is in the final stages of finalising scientific advice relating to CGMMV under the CGMMV Strategy.

Attachment A

Australian Government funding assistance provided for the response to the Panama disease incursion

Funding source	Purpose	Amount $ (GST exclusive)
Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine Initiative	Grant to Queensland to establish an enhanced diagnostic capability	110 000
	Grant to Queensland for front-gate signage, banana grower information and decontamination kits and factsheets	100 000
Stronger Biosecurity and Quarantine Initiative	Grant to Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC) for industry biosecurity officers to help improve on-farm biosecurity practices	300 000
	Grant to ABGC for two international experts to assist industry in responding to Panama disease	20 000
	Deployment of officers to assist in response efforts	110 000
National Landcare Programme	Digital mapping of banana plantations in Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory	366 000
Exotic Pest and Disease Eradication Programme	Reimbursement of costs to affected growers for costs they incurred while not being able to harvest and market fruit	228 081
Total funding		1 234 081

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 35

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy and Implementation Division

Topic: Biosecurity Surveillance

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

How will the $200 million to improve biosecurity surveillance and analysis to better target critical biosecurity risks, including in northern Australia

Answer:

The $200 million announced in the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper to improve biosecurity surveillance and analysis will help manage the risk of entry, establishment and spread of pests, diseases and weeds that could pose a threat to animal, plant or human health or the environment.