



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Biosecurity Reform

The Australian Government continues to progress reforms to deliver a modern biosecurity system that is responsive and targeted, in a changing global trading environment. The reformed system will have an integrated end-to-end approach to managing biosecurity involving offshore, border and onshore activities; a shared responsibility between the Commonwealth, state and territories, industry, the broader community and international stakeholders; and operations based on scientific evidence, rigorous analysis and intelligence to identify and prioritise risks in order to appropriately allocate resources.

Government commitment to biosecurity in the 2011-12 Budget

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to continuing reform of Australia's biosecurity system in the 2011-12 Budget. The government has committed to building a biosecurity system that will deliver a range of benefits including a more efficient management of biosecurity risks, increased productivity in agriculture, facilitation of international trade and protection of Australia's unique environment.

The Budget provides funding for frontline biosecurity operations; the development of options to update information and communication technology (ICT) systems; post-border plant and animal pest and disease eradication and control activities; and investment in progressing future post-entry quarantine arrangements.

The 2011-12 Budget confirms that biosecurity functions will continue to be delivered through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The announcements in the Budget continues the government's momentum to deliver a smarter biosecurity system.

Reform Achievements

Significant steps have already been taken in reforming Australia's biosecurity system; including:

- Risk-based decision making – developing the overarching risk-based approach to biosecurity operations; and trialling risk-based intervention initiatives
- An effective regulatory framework – developing new biosecurity legislation and amending legislation for imported foods to reduce the regulatory burden while maintaining the same high standards
- Productive relationships – negotiating the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity and the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement with the states and territories; establishing the Biosecurity Advisory Council; enhancing the Eminent Scientists Group; and working offshore with international stakeholders to reduce the likelihood of pests and diseases arriving in Australia
- A capable organisation – establishing the interim Inspector General of Biosecurity to provide independent audit and verification; undertaking detailed scoping work to underpin significant upgrades of information and communication technology systems and future post-entry quarantine arrangements; and the development of a Postgraduate Curriculum in Plant Biosecurity



- Efficient operational systems – reform of Australia’s export certification arrangements; commencing redevelopment of ICON – Australia’s import conditions database; and improving the efficient and secure movement of sea containers with trials of an automated messaging system known as S-Cargo.

Reform being progressed

Work is progressing on a risk-based approach to biosecurity operations that will enable the Australian Government to direct its efforts and resources to the pathways and items that present the highest threat to Australians, Australian industry and our environment; along with scoping work to identify the data, analysis and ongoing support systems that are needed to support a risk-based approach.

Work will continue on drafting of the new biosecurity legislation to replace the *Quarantine Act 1908* and subordinate legislation. The new legislation will achieve greater national consistency by drawing on a broader constitutional power base. It will modernise offences and penalties to support an effective compliance scheme and provide for a simpler and more user friendly legislative framework for both industry and the regulator. An exposure draft of the bill will be released for public comment prior to its introduction into Commonwealth Parliament.

The department will commence developing an option for the replacement of the current biosecurity ICT architecture and the modernisation of the existing ICT governance and service delivery structure; leveraging the capabilities of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. This will provide enhanced capability for risk-based management of Australia’s biosecurity system, improved access to information across various applications, and streamlined IT processes.

Maintenance and refurbishment of existing post-entry quarantine facilities will also commence. Work will continue to progress future post-entry quarantine arrangements; including detailed design work, site assessment and related procurement activities.

The biosecurity reform program is about achieving improvements across all areas of the continuum; offshore, at the border and onshore. Further reforms will look at continuing to strengthen partnerships between the Commonwealth, states and territories, industry, trading partners and the community; enhancing import and export market access; updating import conditions and facilitating more efficient importation of goods; increasing the management of risks offshore; enhancing co-regulatory arrangements with our industry partners; and building the capability and capacity to proactively anticipate, detect and respond to emerging pests and disease threats.

Consultation

The reform to Australia’s biosecurity system is substantial and will occur over a number of years. The department will continue to engage stakeholders as biosecurity reforms progress. Further information can be found at www.daff.gov.au/biosecurityreform or by contacting us at biosecurityreform@daff.gov.au.