

Summary of the meeting between Biosecurity Australia and the Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC).

24 April 2008

Attendees			
Biosecurity Australia		ABGC	
Mr John Cahill	Chief Executive	Mr Tony Heidrich	Chief Executive
Dr Bill Roberts	Principal Plant Scientist	Mr Len Collins	Chairman, Imports Committee
Ms Louise van Meurs	General Manager, Plant Biosecurity	Mr Stuart Clague	Senior Associate, Corrs Chambers Westgarth lawyers
Dr Brian Stynes	Chair, IRA team	Dr Rob Reeves	Statistical Consultant
Mr David Porritt	Senior Manager, Plant Biosecurity	Dr Ian Muirhead	Plant Pathology Consultant
Mr Andrew Gill	Senior Associate, Minter Ellison Lawyers	Mr Ron Peterson	Plant Pathology Consultant
Mr Rob Cannon	Statistical Consultant	Mr Patrick Leahy	Imports Committee

Introduction

The meeting opened noting that its purpose was for the ABGC to clarify issues raised by them, as an important stakeholder, in their submissions provided to Biosecurity Australia in response to the revised draft import risk analysis (IRA) report released for stakeholder comment on 1 March 2007.

Mr Cahill noted the presence of legal advisors. He also noted that Biosecurity Australia would need to exercise care in the discussion to ensure that other stakeholders were not disadvantaged in terms of equitable treatment and sharing information. A summary record of the meeting would therefore be made and placed on the public file for this IRA.

Status of IRA

The meeting was updated on the process of developing the final IRA report including that:

- the IRA team had identified all stakeholder comments;
- some stakeholder comments had identified information that required verification; and
- there was an amount of new science, directly relevant to the IRA, that had been published since the release of the revised draft IRA report on 1 March 2007 and that this was also being considered.

The further steps in the IRA process were noted including that:

- as a legacy IRA being conducted under the pre regulated process the role of the independent Eminent Scientists Group (ESG) was to determine if stakeholder

comments had been properly considered in the development of the final IRA report; and

- the final IRA report would be released for appeal.

IRA team membership

The changes in the IRA team were discussed including that:

- Dr Rob Allen had resigned from the IRA team due to ill health;
- Mr Bob Patton has informed Biosecurity Australia that he is travelling overseas and taking a period of leave but remains a member of the IRA team and will continue to contribute to the final IRA report; and
- Dr Singh was a member of the IRA team as a result of his role in Biosecurity Australia. Dr Singh is now employed in another area of DAFF outside Biosecurity Australia and had therefore not continued in the role as a member of the IRA team.

Mr Cahill noted that he did not propose to add to the membership of the IRA team or replace Dr Allen as the development of the IRA report is in the final stages. He also noted that Biosecurity Australia has and will continue to provide significant, dedicated, scientific expertise and resources to support the work of the IRA team in the preparation of final IRA report.

ABGC Stakeholder Submissions

The ABGC nominated a number of issues that they had raised in their stakeholder submissions that they wished to discuss. These comments were discussed under the broad headings of methodology, black Sigatoka, Moko and risk management.

Methodology

The ABGC highlighted their views regarding a number of issues in relation to methodology including the consideration of individual pests, the effect of clustering, the use of median values and combining medians, use of single values and the statistical basis for the surveys.

These issues have been raised previously and were discussed further during the meeting. It was acknowledged that there are other risk assessment methodologies that can be used for risk analyses. However, the methodology used for bananas has been in use for over 8 years and has proved effective in protecting Australia from pests and diseases on regulated import pathways.

Biosecurity Australia agreed with the ABGC comments on the surveys but indicated that the surveys provided indicative values to aid the IRA team in making their decisions. The surveys were never intended to provide definitive values.

Black Sigatoka

The ABGC highlighted their views regarding a number of issues in relation to both their original and supplementary submissions including the susceptibility of native banana species, the size of proximity zones for spore dispersal, survival of fertile

pseudothecia, secondary dispersal, other dispersal mechanisms, endophytic infection of fruit, consequence ratings and the number of spores included in the restricted risk model.

Biosecurity Australia confirmed that the IRA team will consider all comments in the development of the final IRA report. Biosecurity Australia acknowledged that there is a probability of spores dispersing further than the proximity zone included in the revised draft IRA report and that this issue would be addressed in the final IRA report. The ABGC was advised that the susceptibility of native banana species will be specifically addressed and that information provided by the ABGC in relation to dispersal and endophytic infection on fruit will be taken into account in the relevant sections in the final IRA report. The ABGC was advised that all consequence ratings were being reviewed and that needed to be consistent with previous ratings for this, and other pests, with similar biological characteristics in other IRA's.

Biosecurity Australia advised that, in relation to the number of spores considered in the restricted risk model, the value in the draft arose as a result of the rounding down of the value in the restricted risk section of the report. Biosecurity Australia stated that the full range (1-2 spores) as proposed by ABGC will be taken into account in developing the final IRA report. This would result in a median spore count being adopted of 1.5 spores rather than 1.

Moko

The ABGC highlighted their views regarding the number of bacteria cells contaminating insects and washed from waste, the effect of floodwater on the spread of moko (following establishment) and consequence ratings.

Biosecurity Australia advised that there had been a moko expert panel established to provide advice to the IRA team and Biosecurity Australia in relation to stakeholder comments regarding the moko pest risk assessment and data sheet. This group was reviewing all stakeholder comments in detail.

Risk management

Biosecurity Australia indicated that the text surrounding the risk management sections for each pest risk assessment may be modified. The proposed modifications would reflect deliberations by the IRA team on stakeholder comments and on the minority view that accompanied the revised draft IRA report. Biosecurity Australia advised that while the descriptive text may change, the overall risk management scenarios described in the revised draft IRA report would not. However, there would be a greater emphasis in the text on the need for risk management measures to achieve performance targets.