



Australian Government
Biosecurity Australia

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BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA ADVICE 2008/05

**COMMENCEMENT OF AN IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS FOR
APPLE FRUIT FROM THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

This Biosecurity Australia Advice announces the formal commencement of an Import Risk Analysis (IRA) under the regulated IRA process to consider a proposal to import apple fruit from China.

This analysis will be undertaken as an expanded IRA, requiring completion within 30 months from announcement. The *Quarantine Regulations 2000* provide that the Chief Executive of Biosecurity Australia may decide the expanded process will be followed where the IRA involves significant differences in scientific opinion or significant harm to people, animals, plants or the environment may result from an importation.

As this IRA will be undertaken using the expanded process, the IRA will also involve review by the Eminent Scientists Group that is independent of Biosecurity Australia.

The transition of this risk analysis into the new regulated IRA process recognises work already undertaken under the previous process, including pest categorisation, draft pest risk assessments and potential mitigation measures. There is also existing biosecurity policy for the importation of pears from China to Australia and existing trade in this commodity which is relevant to the pest and disease risks associated with potential apple imports from China. Having regard to the substantial preliminary work already undertaken, Biosecurity Australia expects it will be able to complete the IRA earlier than the 30 months allowed under the regulated process and, subject to the processes outlined below, expects to be able to issue a draft IRA report early in the third quarter of 2008.

Biosecurity Australia is presently developing an issues paper that will shortly be circulated for comment by and consultation with interested stakeholders. Stakeholders will have up to 60 days to submit written comments on the issues and will have opportunities to discuss matters raised in any submissions directly with Biosecurity Australia. Biosecurity Australia will also announce the formation of an expert panel to assist its consideration of the scientific issues associated with the proposed importation.

Biosecurity Australia Policy Memorandum 2007/20 of 12 September 2007 advised stakeholders that changes to the import risk analysis (IRA) process had been implemented on 5 September 2007 when regulations made under the *Quarantine Act 1908* formally took effect. That advice also notified the transitional arrangements for Biosecurity Australia's import work program.

Substantial preliminary work has already been undertaken in relation to the IRA of apples from China. Many of the pests of concern to Australia have been considered through the risk analyses of pears from China, and trade in pears from China has already occurred. Notwithstanding this, Biosecurity Australia will undertake this IRA using the expanded IRA process on the basis that it expects that the IRA involves significant differences in scientific opinion. An issues paper will be issued for comment and consultation, an expert specialist panel will be formed to assist consideration of the scientific issues and the IRA will be reviewed in due course by the independent Eminent Scientists Group.

Although the regulations allow a timeframe of 30 months to complete an expanded IRA, in view of the significant work that has already been undertaken, the estimated timeframe for completing this IRA is expected to be less than 30 months from this announcement. As indicated, an issues paper will be circulated to stakeholders shortly.

In announcing this IRA, Biosecurity Australia has considered advice from the Import Market Access Advisory Group, which was established as part of the improved IRA arrangements to advise Biosecurity Australia on priorities for import proposals.

The regulations require the Chief Executive of Biosecurity Australia to formally announce the commencement of IRAs to be undertaken under the regulated process. This announcement triggers the start of the regulated timeframe for an IRA.

Further information on the new regulated IRA process can be found on Biosecurity Australia's website www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au

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The Government recently announced a comprehensive review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. The review is expected to report by 31 July 2008. It is possible that recommendations for further improvements to Australia's IRA process will flow from the review. Any need for further changes will be considered, in consultation with stakeholders, once the outcomes of the review are known. In the meantime, Biosecurity Australia will continue with its work program.