COUNTRY REPORT SUMMARY

AUSTRALIA

Australia has recently reformed its import risk analyses (IRA) process to increase transparency and timeliness, enhance consultation with stakeholders and increase the level of scientific scrutiny. The reforms will not compromise Australia's conservative approach to quarantine or change our science based risk analysis.

Timeframes for the completion of IRAs have been imposed through regulations, improving timeliness and predictability for stakeholders. The regulations provide for a standard or expanded IRA process, depending on the complexity of the science and nature of the biosecurity risks. A standard IRA will be completed within 24 months and an expanded IRA within 30 months. The new process has the flexibility for timeframes to be suspended in certain circumstances, such as when Biosecurity Australia is waiting for scientific information considered essential to complete the IRA. The role of the Eminent Scientists Group (ESG) has been strengthened. The ESG's role will now include assessing conflicting scientific views provided to it and reviewing the conclusions of draft final IRA reports to ensure they are scientifically-based on the material presented.

A high level Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry group has been established to prioritise import proposals, thus assisting Biosecurity Australia to develop its work programme. The group will also monitor the progress of IRAs undertaken by Biosecurity Australia. Biosecurity Australia has completed the IRA for New Zealand apples under the previous IRA process and will also finalise the Philippines banana IRA under the old IRA process. The Chief Executive of Biosecurity Australia will announce the transition arrangements for other IRAs currently underway closer to the commencement of the new process.

Australia continues to be active in standard setting, both internationally and through the APPPC, with Australia involved in the draft ISPM on *Sampling of consignments* and the Technical Panels on Phytosanitary Treatments and Fruit Flies; and the production of the draft RSPM on Scales.

Australia continues to detect and respond to incursions of emergency plant pests. The approach rate of timber borer pests remains high and will be the subject of a pathway risk analysis to review existing approaches to phytosanitary management. Long running eradication programs include 6 invasive weed species, citrus canker, red imported fire ant and *Wassmania* fire ant in Queensland, European House Borer in Western Australia. Grapevine leaf rust has been eradicated from the Northern Territory following a four year program. Australian industries continue to develop industry specific Biosecurity Plans to significantly reduce the risk and spread of pest incursions.

A Cooperative Research Centre of National Plant Biosecurity has been established to coordinate and undertake national plant biosecurity research.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) was restructured on 1 January 2007. It has a new Executive Director, Stephen Hunter, and plant quarantine and plant exports are now handled in different branches in different divisions.

From 1 July 2007, new corporate governance structures came into effect at the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) following reforms implemented by the Australian Government. Key reforms include conferring responsibility for governance of the APVMA on the Chief Executive Officer and establishing a new Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will include experts in the chemical industry, primary production, consumer interests, public health, the environment and occupational health and safety. These reforms only relate to the governance of the APVMA and do not change the regulatory scheme that is administered by the APVMA.

Australia submitted its National Implementation Plan to the Stockholm Convention Secretariat in August 2006 setting out how Australia will implement its obligations under the Convention. Australia has eliminated the use of the POP chemical mirex and is in the process of withdrawing its exemption. Australia is in the process of adopting the best available techniques (BAT) and provisional guidance on best environmental practices(BEP).

The Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEW) administers the Designated National Authority (DNA) obligations for industrial chemicals in cooperation with the Australian regulator for industrial chemicals, the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS). The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry administers DNA obligations for pesticides.

The Australian Biosecurity System for Primary Production and the Environment (AusBIOSEC) has been established as a whole-of-government project to improve Australia's biosecurity status. Its aim is to improve outcomes from Australia's biosecurity system for primary production and the environment, through greater national coordination on biosecurity policy, regulation, funding and delivery across jurisdictions and sectors. The scope of AusBIOSEC is along the entire biosecurity continuum from pre-border, border to post-border management of biosecurity risk.