



Communiqué:

2019 Quarantine Regulators Meeting

Panama City, Panama 10-12 April, 2019

The 2019 Quarantine Regulators Meeting (QRM) was held in Panama City, Panama from 10 to 12 April 2019. This meeting was the second meeting under the three year theme *Advancing biosecurity systems through a success-oriented plan*. The focus of the meeting was on *implementing controls and ongoing verification*. The meeting, the eleventh of its kind, was co-hosted by the Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) and the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) with support from the Panamanian Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario.

The meeting had an attendance of 59 delegates representing 31 biosecurity agencies, discussing trade, future biosecurity controls and intelligence, pest controls, operations and border controls, and travellers. Mr Efrain Medina, Executive Director, OIRSA and Mr Jagtej Singh Assistant Secretary, DAWR opened the meeting. They both remarked on the importance of international cooperation and collaboration in successful biosecurity management and noted that fora such as the QRM are an excellent opportunity to connect with international counterparts.

Dr Kate Makin was then introduced as the new Australian Agriculture Counsellor to Mexico with responsibility for Central America. She spoke about the role of an Agricultural Counsellor in facilitating agricultural trade and cooperation. Dr Makin is the first Agricultural Counsellor in Mexico and she noted that her appointment reflected Australia's recognition of the importance of Central America in global agricultural trade.

Mr Melvin Spreij from the Standards and Trade Development Facility and Mr Shane Sela from the World Bank then presented on the role their organisations play in improving trade facilitation. They spoke of the importance of safe trade in trade facilitation. They encouraged delegates to read the recently endorsed Trade Facilitation Agreement and remarked on the relationship between that agreement and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement. They asked delegates to think about how biosecurity measures could be applied in a more efficient and less trade restrictive way while better managing biosecurity risk.

Mr Christian Delis from the United States Department of Agriculture presented on the benefits of ePhyto and gave a demonstration of the IPPC Hub. A generic, off-the-shelf, ePhyto system is currently being trialled by three agencies and is expected to become more widely available in the next six months. This system will remove the need for agencies to develop their own proprietary systems saving time and money.

Mr Stephen Peios from DAWR facilitated a workshop on innovation and the future of biosecurity. Delegates were asked to think about factors that would affect global trade in the future and how that would impact biosecurity management. Factors discussed included changing populations, emerging markets, the effect of 3D printing on manufacturing, climate change and transportation improvements. Delegates were also asked to think about how, as a biosecurity regulator, their agencies could respond to these factors. Responses included better use of new technologies including machine learning and artificial intelligence, better partnerships with industry, building relationships with other governments, investing in human capital and using a risk return approach.

OIRSA and Mexico presented on their risk analysis and intelligence systems. Both presentations remarked on the importance of risk analysis and intelligence in managing biosecurity risk.

Australia then presented on two publicly available resources they have developed to support biosecurity management. The Pest and Disease Image Library (PADIL) is a resource that can be used by border staff, entomologists and anyone else looking for help in identifying pests and disease. The International Biosecurity Intelligence System (IBIS) is an open source intelligence gathering tool. IBIS scours the internet for news articles, social media posts and other publicly available information for information on pests and disease outbreaks around the world.

Panama, Guatemala, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Australia all presented on management and eradication programs they have in place for various pests and diseases. These presentations highlighted how difficult and expensive control and eradication programs are and the importance of having effective controls in place to prevent the introduction of pests and disease.

Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia presented on their inspection programs in the cargo, passengers and mail pathways. These presentations gave a great insight into some of the innovation occurring around the world in inspection activities including new smart X-ray technologies, detector dogs and smarter targeting and profiling.

The 2019 QRM included a field trip to the Atlantic entrance of the Panama Canal. The impact of the Panama Canal on global trade cannot be overstated and the field trip gave delegates an excellent opportunity to see it first hand. Delegates were given an opportunity to view some of the biosecurity controls OIRSA and the Panamanian Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario have introduced in Panamanian ports including chemical sprays for containers, fumigation and methyl bromide recapture and pre-export vehicle sanitation. The field trip also gave delegates an opportunity to experience Panamanian culture through a traditional dance performance.

Finally, the meeting closed with Mr Jagtej Singh thanking delegates for their participation and valuable discussion. He remarked that the QRM provided a great opportunity for international cooperation on biosecurity issues but reminded delegates that this meeting is just the start of cooperation. He encouraged all the delegates to continue to discuss and collaborate out of session. He closed by thanking OIRSA for co-hosting the 2019 QRM and thanked Panama for their warm hospitality for the week.