



Cut Flower and Foliage Imports

Industry Forum Communiqué



On Friday, 5 April 2019, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) held an industry forum to inform and discuss with industry [the revised import conditions](#), [the pest risk analysis](#) and the inspections and pest diagnostics undertaken on cut flower and foliage imports.

Those present at the forum included representatives from Australia's importing, floriculture, plant-based agriculture and horticulture industries, and the logistics supply chain (e.g. freight, fumigation, etc.); as well as state and territory governments and Australia's cut flower trading partners.

The forum was opened by Dr Marion Healy, First Assistant Secretary, Biosecurity Plant Division. The opening address was followed by a series of presentations from the department and industry (Dr Vanessa Findlay representing the cut flower importing industry; and Alana Pittard representing the plant-based agriculture industry); and an address by Ms Lyn O'Connell, the department's Deputy Secretary responsible for biosecurity.

The department outlined how it has responded to the significant growth in the volume of cut flowers and foliage arriving in to Australia.

- The department introduced revised import conditions in March 2018 in response to the findings of the 2017 review of import conditions that revealed the reliance on a single critical point of control (the use of methyl bromide fumigation onshore) presented a significant biosecurity risk to Australia. The revised import conditions are designed to move risk offshore, with multiple control points established to ensure a systemic approach to managing biosecurity risk.
- The department commenced a pest risk analysis (PRA) for cut flowers and foliage in July 2018. The PRA found that there has been a three-fold increase in the number of consignments of cut flowers and foliage arriving in Australia since 2007; average interception rates of live pests found on cut flower and foliage imports of around 60%, with some countries having 80% of their cut flower and foliage consignments arriving in Australia with live pests. The PRA also found that a reliance on visual inspection and onshore fumigation alone was not sufficient to manage the increasing biosecurity risk, supporting the new requirement to have multiple control points across the biosecurity continuum.

- The department has been monitoring cut flower and foliage imports since 1 March 2018. During this time, the department has observed that non-compliance rates have varied between countries and the pest treatment method used. The lowest levels of non-compliance were seen when methyl bromide fumigation was used pre-shipment. Of particular concern has been the continued high levels of non-compliance from countries that export high volumes of cut flowers using the systems approach. To address this issue, the department will consider introducing import permits for the systems approach management option from these countries if non-compliance rates have not improved by 1 June 2019.

Dr Findlay, who presented on behalf of the cut flower trading community, outlined the need to facilitate safe trade in cut flowers through accurate risk assessment and the application of appropriate and proven risk management strategies. Dr Findlay outlined that imports make up more than 40% of the cut flower industry in Australia and her view that the recent changes to biosecurity measures has led to significant damage to long-established trade pathways, trade relationships and businesses, and has also contributed to a significant quality degradation for the broader flower industry. Dr Findlay outlined a range of available options that would deliver improved biosecurity outcomes as well as support high-quality trade. In this context, Dr Findlay suggested that onshore fumigation should be re-instated as a risk management measure until it can be demonstrated that the revised import conditions are 1) effective in managing biosecurity risk; 2) will have minimal impacts on the cut flower importing industry and trade relationships and; 3) will support a system of continuous improvement in managing the import pathway.

Ms Alana Pittard, who presented on behalf of the plant-based agriculture industries, i.e. horticulture, grain, etc., outlined the impact to those industries should pests and diseases associated with cut flowers and foliage imports enter Australia. Ms Pittard suggested a number of options including re-instating onshore fumigation; destroying cut flower and foliage consignments arriving with live pests; mandatory country of origin labelling; and requiring exporting countries to reduce non-compliance to no more than 10% of all consignments.

Ms O'Connell outlined the department's role in protecting Australia through the regulation of imported goods, and minimising adverse impacts on Australia's agricultural sector, trade, environment and way of life. The department operates in accordance with the World Trade Organization and other international obligations. It uses a risk management approach to reduce risk to a very low level rather than zero in order to balance the protection of Australia's unique biosecurity status with the ability to maintain trade in cut flowers. The cut flower and foliage industry has seen global trade changes; increasing volumes; new species; new sources of origin; and changing risk dynamics. Of all goods imported into Australia, cut flowers and foliage represent the highest rate of live pest interceptions by the department. This rate, together with the reliance on a single point of control under previous import conditions, had a significant potential for failure and supports the changes in the department's approach to managing risk.

The presentations were followed by an hour of discussion with a panel that included senior executives from the Biosecurity Plant and Biosecurity Operations divisions, and industry representatives.

The department is considering the comments and suggestions received during the forum. It intends to hold further meetings with stakeholders on the topics discussed later in the year.



Please note: the department had originally advised that it would decide on 1 June 2019 which highly non-compliant, high volume countries will require import permits for the systems approach management option. The department has since extended the timeframe for making the decision to 1 July 2019. These countries will be required to use another form of pest treatment or import permits to continue sending cut flowers and foliage to Australia from 1 September 2019. The import permit will allow the department to assess the management systems of importers and their growers before allowing importation of cut flowers and foliage. This will ensure that the systems in place are adequate to address the biosecurity risks.

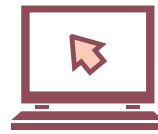




Representatives

Representatives from the state and territory governments and the following organisations attended:

- All In Season
- Associated Flowers International
- Australian Florist Network
- Australian Horticultural Exporters and Importers Association
- AUSVEG
- Brickfielder GE
- Christensen's Flower Auction
- Embassy of Colombia
- Embassy of Ecuador
- Flora Network Sydney
- Floraco
- Flower Flow
- Flower Growers of NSW
- Flower Point
- Flowers Australia
- FTAlliance
- India High Commission
- Lynch Group
- Macdonald Customs
- Mainfreight Air and Ocean
- Mauritius High Commission
- National Farmers Federation
- NSW Farmers
- Price and Speed Containers
- Royal Thai Embassy
- Tony's Wholesale Flowers
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Wildflowers Australia



Stay updated

Get information and updates on cut flowers and foliage imports by subscribing to our online [subscription service](#). By subscribing to [Biosecurity Risk Analysis Plant](#) you will receive Biosecurity Advices and other notifications relating to plant biosecurity policy.



Contact us

If you are an importer, exporter or grower of cut flowers and foliage for export to Australia and you have a question about Australia's import conditions, you can contact us on imports@agriculture.gov.au. Please allow up to 10 working days for a response. You can also call us on:

- **1800 900 090** (from within Australia)
- **+61 3 8318 6700** (from outside Australia)



Phone 1800 900 090 (from within Australia)
+61 3 8318 6700 (from outside Australia)



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