Risk Analysis Efficiencies and Stakeholder Engagement
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
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Re: Draft report for the review of biosecurity import requirements for fresh jujubes from China

Growcom has reviewed the draft for the review of biosecurity import requirements for fresh jujubes from China. We have consulted with a Queensland grower of the Jujube industry to discuss the risks posed to the commodity from pests listed that the importation may expose crops to.

It is noted that this draft report proposes a range of risk management measures, combined with an operational system, to reduce the risks posed by the eight pests to achieve the appropriate level of protection for Australia. These measures include:

- area freedom or fruit treatment (such as cold treatment, methyl bromide fumigation followed by cold treatment, or irradiation) for fruit flies
- area freedom or fruit treatment (such as methyl bromide fumigation or irradiation) or a systems approach approved by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for peach fruit borer
- pre-export visual inspection and, if detected, remedial action for spider mites, mealybugs and/or thrips.

The report states, “The biosecurity risk posed by thrips, and the orthotospoviruses they transmit, from all countries, was previously assessed in the Final group pest risk analysis for thrips and orthotospoviruses on fresh fruit, vegetable, cut-flower and foliage imports (thrips group PRA) (Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 2017b), which is applicable to Chinese jujubes from China”.

Growcom questions the effectiveness of the element of visual inspection undertaken by the exporting country, as we have been made aware that there are current concerns over protocols for cut flowers whereby Australian inspecting officers are reporting noteworthy failures in flower imports reaching our boarders with significant numbers of live insects such as thrips.

Import processes are based on previous pest assessments which do lose some relevance depending on crop similarities. Notwithstanding, it is worth questioning whether this process will be adequate as thrips, mites and mealybugs are small and easily overlooked.
As Growcom is the peak industry body representing pineapples, we are also acutely aware of the possibility of new pests affecting other crops, specifically pineapples. Although the specific species cited are not currently known as pest in pineapples, pineapples are affected by other mites and mealy bugs so it is worth being vigilant with new species with any potential to jump to alternate hosts.

Historical data shows that if there is to be an exotic pest incursion that the greatest likelihood is that it will be an Hemipteran pest, potentially thrips and mealybugs in this case, so we feel these warrant heightened concern.

Growcom thanks the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for their consultative approach to this risk analysis and for keeping industry well informed of the approach and progress.

Regards,

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