



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Official Control of Plant Quarantine Pests: National Policy 2025

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Version control

This policy was endorsed by the Plant Health Committee on 3 December 2024. It replaces the *Plant Quarantine Pest and Official Control National Policy* published in 2017.

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Introduction

Policy objectives and scope

This policy provides a framework for implementing official control programs for pests of concern in Australia to justify those pests as quarantine pests and justify quarantine measures at international ports of entry and for domestic trade. This policy also supports exporting plants and plant products (referred to as 'plants') from areas absent from those pests that are under official control.

The objectives of this policy and its supporting documents are to:

- clarify the requirements for official control of pests in Australia. This will help support international quarantine measures, meet international standards and obligations
- create clear understanding of the evidence and information needed to demonstrate the official control of a pest and to support its quarantine status
- identify quarantine pests of concern in Australia and implement and maintain appropriate official control programs for those pests
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of Australian, state and territory governments (jurisdictions), industry and relevant stakeholders in implementing official control programs
- defend Australia's regulatory position and interests on quarantine pests of concern under official control.

This policy does not cover:

- pests under official control as part of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) eradication and transition to management phases
- regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQPs).

Policy context

Australia benefits significantly from global trade in plants and from strong biosecurity protections. Australia's trade and biosecurity benefits come partly from multilateral engagement through the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). This body sets standards for mutual understanding of concepts relating to plant protection and trade. These standards are a foundation for Australia's trade negotiations, including our requests for export of plants and our response to other countries requests to export plants to Australia and are the basis of this national policy.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is the National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO) for Australia. Under IPPC rules, the NPPO is responsible to other IPPC member countries for overseeing plant protection matters within their country. This includes facilitating the implementation of international standards. This document aims to assist all Australian governments, industry and other relevant stakeholders to consistently implement the IPPC's concept of official control of quarantine pests. This ensures Australia's regulation of pests is internationally justifiable and defensible, particularly in relation to international import requirements and phytosanitary certification. The IPPC defines official control as:

The active enforcement of mandatory phytosanitary regulations and the application of mandatory phytosanitary procedures with the objective of eradication or containment of quarantine pests or for the management of regulated non-quarantine pests. (IPPC 2024a)

This definition exists in the context of trade and biosecurity interactions between contracting parties of the IPPC. Official control is applied to quarantine pests or regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQPs). This document sets the policy for the official control of quarantine pests. The internationally agreed definition of a quarantine pest is:

A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled (IPPC 2024a).

Information on RNQPs is in the [National Policy on Regulated Non-Quarantine Pests](#).

Types of official control

Official control of a pest allows the Australian Government to regulate that pest at Australia's international border to prevent its entry into the country. Official control of a pest can also minimise or avoid phytosanitary requirements for export of plants from areas where the pest is absent. Official control should aim to contain or eradicate the pest within Australia. Official control is implemented to either exclude a pest from an endangered area or contain the pest in the infested area in which it has established. The Australian Government defines 'exclusionary official control' and 'containment official control' as:

- Exclusionary official control – seeks to prevent the pest entering the endangered area (area under official control) by establishing appropriate phytosanitary measures.
- Containment official control – seeks to contain the pest in the infested area to prevent its spread to endangered areas by establishing appropriate phytosanitary measures to prevent the pest's movement out of the area under official control.

The Australian Government recognises official control as either national or regional.

- National official control – all jurisdictions are protected from the spread of the pest of concern, which has been contained in a limited area within a jurisdiction (or multiple jurisdictions) and where those infested jurisdictions apply measures to contain the pest. Jurisdictions free from the pest may need to establish measures to exclude the pest to support the official control program.
- Regional official control – selected jurisdictions are protected from the spread of the pest of concern, which is being contained within or excluded from those selected jurisdictions but present in other jurisdictions.

Learn more about [national and regional official control](#).

Benefits and general requirements

Official control of a plant quarantine pest can:

- safeguard Australia from pest incursions by providing justification to regulate those pests at international ports of entry
- prevent geographic expansion of the pest
- maintain favourable market access conditions for Australian exporters
- maintain grower profitability that could be impacted by crop damage and revenue losses caused by the pest
- safeguard environmental assets that the pest could impact
- harmonise controls and measures to help pest eradication or management efforts.

Quarantine measures on imported goods are not justified if a pest is present in Australia and is not under official control. Trading partners may require measures to be applied to goods exported from Australia against the pest concerned.

Official control of quarantine pests involves mandatory phytosanitary activities to prevent pest entry, establishment and spread in the endangered area. Quarantine pests under official control in Australia are regulated by the department at Australia's international ports of entry. Jurisdictions apply interstate and intrastate controls to limit the domestic spread of pests.

Jurisdictions must seek recognition from the department for pests they intend to manage, in order for the department to accept a pest as 'under official control' and regulate it. This includes submitting an official control application to the department where the proposed control measures are agreed by the department. When an official control application is inadequate or does not provide equivalent controls to those that the department implements at the border, then the applying jurisdiction is notified and must respond to those concerns. Jurisdictions implement agreed measures in full within an agreed timeframe for the department to regulate the pest. These measures must also be covered in interstate trade agreements.

Jurisdictions are responsible for establishing and overseeing official control programs within their jurisdictions once agreed by the department. These responsibilities are shared with other relevant stakeholders (e.g. third-party providers, industry, growers) within their jurisdictions. These arrangements must be supported by jurisdiction regulatory instruments, be clearly defined and communicated to all involved parties, including the department.

Jurisdictions implement official control to support trade. An example of this is to support trade of plants where the production area is situated within the endangered area (pest is absent), and the pest is being contained within the infested area. The endangered area is free from the pest of concern and may be used to support trade of consignments from this area.

Procedural and technical guidance to support this policy is contained in the:

- *Official control of plant quarantine pests: Guidelines*
- *Official control of plant quarantine pests: Application template.*

Domestic requirements for official control

Jurisdictions can submit an application to the department seeking recognition that a pest is 'under official control' if the pest:

- is present in Australia, not widely distributed, and the jurisdictions have applied phytosanitary measures to contain or exclude the pest
- the pest has the potential to cause significant economic and/or environmental damage.

Jurisdictions must submit an application that identifies the pest status in the submitting jurisdiction, undertake a pest risk assessment (PRA), and outline measures to contain or exclude the pest to enable the department to determine if a pest of concern meets the requirements to be considered under official control.

Pest status

If a pest of concern is present in a jurisdiction, to be considered a quarantine pest and regulated at international ports of entry in jurisdictions, the pest must have one of the following statuses in accordance with *ISPM 8: Determination of pest status in an area*:

- Absent (note further subcategories under ISPM 8)
- Present – transient
- Present – not widely distributed and under official control.

No other plant pest status categories provide justification for declaring a pest a quarantine pest.

To justify the Australian Government's regulatory actions on a quarantine pest of concern, jurisdictions must determine the presence or absence of the pest within their jurisdictions and have appropriate controls in place to manage that pest.

If the pest is absent from the jurisdiction, regulatory controls must be in place to prevent pest entry from other parts of Australia (if the pest is present in other parts of Australia). If the pest is present in the jurisdiction, the distribution of the pest must be delimited and regulatory controls must be in place to prevent the pest spreading outside the delimited area. Details of these regulatory controls and other biosecurity activities undertaken by the jurisdiction (i.e. official control program) must be submitted to the department and accepted. This justifies the department to continue regulating the pest at the international port of entry in that jurisdiction.

Non-quarantine pests (pests are established in Australia) can be regulated at international ports of entry if:

- they are a vector for quarantine pests of Australia. These organisms are known as regulated articles
- they are transmitted through plants for planting (e.g. seeds, nursery stocks), cause significant economic damage due to infestation, and are being suppressed. These pests are known as Regulated Non-Quarantine Pests (RNQP).

As a contracting party to the IPPC, the Australian Government, through the department, is responsible for providing timely advice on Australia's regulatory status of pests to IPPC contracting parties. For example, an IPPC notification is completed following a new detection of a significant pest currently under an eradication program in Australia, to ensure contracting parties are aware of the updated pest status.

Pest risk assessment

Jurisdictions are responsible for performing a pest risk assessment consistent with ISPM 11, including outlining key assumptions, reasoning that inform the probability of the pest entering and spreading in the endangered area, as well as impact to their jurisdictions. These inform risk management measures in the official control program. Jurisdictions must demonstrate that the pest risk has been assessed as part of its application for an official control program to be recognised by the department.

Risk appropriate measures

Following pest risk assessment, any pathway that does not achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP) require measures to reduce the pathway risk to very low. Official control requires mandatory measures that are technically justified, transparent, non-discriminatory and risk proportionate. Official control programs should be consulted on and agreed to by the responsible jurisdictions, relevant stakeholders within their jurisdictions, impacted jurisdictions, prior to being submitted to the department for consideration. The official control program must be fully implemented within an agreed timeframe for the department to continue regulating the pest of concern as a quarantine pest at international ports of entry.

Principles of official control in Australia

The following official control principles are derived from ISPM requirements (IPPC 2021a, IPPC 2024b). Phytosanitary measures proposed in an official control program recognised by the department must incorporate 3 principles:

- Principle 1 Official control requires mandatory activities that are technically justified and non-discriminatory
- Principle 2 Official control must be applied geographically
- Principle 3 Official control must be authorised, transparent and enforceable by law.

Principle 1 Official control requires mandatory activities that are technically justified and non-discriminatory

Mandatory activities

Activities must include mandatory phytosanitary measures applied to the pest of concern. These activities could include one or more of the following:

- active exclusion of the pest from the endangered area, or containment of the pest in the infested area
- surveillance in the endangered area for the pest of concern. The responsible jurisdictions determine the surveillance methodology that are supported by scientific evidence to meet the official control objective
- movement controls for regulated articles between the infested and endangered areas.

The description of these mandatory activities is purposely generic to allow proposed phytosanitary measures to:

- be proportionate to the pest risk
- allow jurisdictions and industry to be innovative and propose measures that achieve the required outcomes efficiently and effectively.

Technical justification

All phytosanitary measures must be technically justified and proportionate to the risk posed by the pests to ensure they manage risk while being no more trade restrictive than necessary. The level of surveillance and measures to reduce the likelihood of entry, establishment and spread of a pest into the endangered area is dependent on the pest biology and pathway characteristics. Measures to reduce the likelihood of entry, establishment and spread of the pest could vary from generic movement controls and entry conditions that are already in place (e.g. restrictions on machinery movement, signages, treatments) to new, specific, and targeted inspection requirements and other measures. As the biology will be different for each pest, the requirements for official control may be different.

Non-discriminatory

Jurisdictions should ensure that the measures proposed for official control are no less stringent than equivalent measures at the international ports of entry. Phytosanitary measures must also be consistent between domestic requirements and international import requirements.

Principle 2 Official control must be applied geographically

Official control of quarantine pests must be applied at a geographical level and the area must be defined. The infested and endangered area must be clear. This will justify regulations at international ports of entry. It will also support claims that the pest is absent and to facilitate trade in clean plants outside the infested area.

The department recognises official control programs on a national or regional level.

National application

A pest is under 'official control (national)' if the pest is present in a small area in Australia and the jurisdictions where the pest is present apply measures to contain it. If appropriate, such as when there is significant risk of a pest spreading, other jurisdictions that are free from the pest should apply measures to exclude the pest from entering their jurisdictions.

If official control (national) is recognised, the pest of concern can be categorised as a national quarantine pest. The department can regulate the pest at all international ports of entry, including into the jurisdiction where the pest is known to occur.

Regional application

A pest is under official control (regional) if the endangered area is separated from the infested area by natural barriers (e.g. deserts, oceans, mountain ranges) and/or artificial barriers (e.g. disparate planting distributions of host crops). Where the pest is present in jurisdictions and those jurisdictions are not placing the pest under official control, the jurisdictions within the endangered area must provide evidence of the pest's absence. In addition, they must implement phytosanitary measures and barriers to prevent the pest's entry from areas where the pest is present. In this case, the department can regulate the pest at international ports of entry in jurisdictions where the pest is absent. However, the pest will not be regulated at the international ports of entry in jurisdictions where the pest is present and not under official control.

The pest can be categorised as a regional quarantine pest if official control (regional) is implemented. Domestic quarantine measures equivalent to phytosanitary measures on international imported goods must be in place to prevent pest entry to the jurisdictions where the pest is under official control.

Principle 3 Official control must be authorised, transparent and enforceable by law

Jurisdiction legislative authority and department recognition

The appropriate jurisdictions' legislative authorities must establish official control activities. The department must formally recognise these activities to regulate the pest as a quarantine pest at international ports of entry.

Implementation and reporting

Jurisdictions are required to confirm and update official control status and, where required, provide information and/or documentation on official control activities to the department.

If jurisdictions overseeing an official control program decide to modify or terminate official control activities, they must consult the department in advance. Where appropriate, the official control status of the pest and import restrictions may be reviewed or revoked.

Jurisdictions may partner with industry and other appropriate third-party service providers to conduct the required activities for an official control program. All entities and persons involved must be authorised to perform those activities.

Recordkeeping

All involved parties must complete the recordkeeping of all aspects of an official control program. The department may request relevant records from jurisdictions to provide evidence of official control programs.

Enforcement

Official control programs must include legal enforcement mechanisms. Enforcement should include a legal basis, operational implementation, evaluation and review, and phytosanitary action in the case of non-compliance.

Review

Official control programs may require a review if new information arises. This can include when information suggests that agreed official control activities are not effective.

Jurisdictions should consult with other impacted jurisdictions and must inform the department if they are considering modifying or ceasing an official control program. Changes in an official control program in one jurisdiction may affect the official control and pest status in other jurisdictions.

Conclusion

Official control:

- prevents the geographic expansion of a quarantine pest within Australia
- justifies quarantine measures at international ports of entry
- supports Australia's strong biosecurity status
- strengthens Australia's reputation as a country that is free from many pests and has a strong framework to manage pests that are present
- supports the export of plants from areas where the pest is absent.

Effective implementation of official control can maintain or improve existing market access, open new market access opportunities and increase grower profitability.

'Official control' and 'quarantine pests' are defined IPPC terms that describe the mandatory requirements needed to comply with internationally agreed standards. This policy supports the effective application of the official control of plant quarantine pests in Australia and reinforces the types of pests that may be subject to it.

Learn more about [official control of plant pests and diseases](#).

Glossary

Term	Definition
containment	Application of phytosanitary measures in and around an infested area to prevent spread of a pest (IPPC 2024a).
containment official control	Seeks to contain the pest in an area it is currently present to prevent its spread to other endangered areas by establishing appropriate phytosanitary measures to prevent the pest's movement out of the official control zone.
endangered area	An area where ecological factors favour the establishment of a pest whose presence in the area will result in economically important loss (IPPC 2024a).
eradication	Application of phytosanitary measures to eliminate a pest from an area (IPPC 2024a).
exclusion	Application of phytosanitary measures to prevent the entry or establishment of a pest into an area (IPPC 2024a).
exclusionary official control	Seeks to prevent the pest's entry into an endangered area by establishing appropriate phytosanitary measures to prevent the pest's movement into the official control zone.
infested area	An area where the pest of concern is considered to be present and/or endemic.
jurisdiction	The responsible biosecurity agency or agencies within a state and/or territory government.
official control (national)	Occurs when all jurisdictions are considered protected from the spread of the pest of concern, which has been contained in a small area within jurisdictions and where those infested jurisdictions apply measures to contain the pest.
official control (regional)	Occurs when not all jurisdictions are considered protected from the spread of the pest of concern. The pest is considered being contained within, or excluded from, a few jurisdictions, but considered as present in other jurisdictions.
pest risk assessment	Evaluation of the probability of the introduction and spread of a pest and the magnitude of the associated potential economic consequences (IPPC 2024a).
phytosanitary measure	Any legislation, regulation or official procedure having the purpose to prevent the introduction or spread of quarantine pests, or to limit the economic impact of regulated non-quarantine pests (IPPC 2024a).
quarantine pest	A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled (IPPC 2024a).
regulated article	Any plant, plant product, storage place, packaging, conveyance, container, soil and any other organism, object, or material capable of harbouring or spreading pests, deemed to require phytosanitary measures, particularly where international transportation is involved (IPPC 2024a).
regulated non-quarantine pest	A non-quarantine pest whose presence in plants for planting affects the intended use of those plants with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party (IPPC 2024a).
surveillance	An official process whereby information on pests in an area is obtained through general surveillance, specific surveillance, or a combination of both (IPPC 2024a).
technically justified	Justified on the basis of conclusions reached by using an appropriate pest risk analysis or, where applicable, another comparable examination and evaluation of available scientific information (IPPC 2024a).

References

IPPC 2021a, [ISPM 1: Phytosanitary principles for the protection of plants and the application of phytosanitary measures in international trade](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed 20 January 2025.

—2021b, [ISPM 11: Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed 20 January 2025.

IPPC 2022, [ISPM 8: Determination of pest status in an area](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed 20 January 2025.

IPPC 2024a, [ISPM 5: Glossary of phytosanitary terms](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed 20 January 2025.

—2024b, [ISPM 5 Supplement 1: Guidelines on the interpretation and application of the concepts of "official control" and "not widely distributed"](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed 20 January 2025.