



Plant Health Committee Communiqué—PHC46

The Plant Health Committee (PHC) held its forty-sixth meeting in Orange, New South Wales. This location provided an opportunity for the Committee to visit the Australian Scientific Collections Unit at the Orange Agriculture Institute (OAI), in addition to having presentations from DPI NSW on their new initiative to develop a biosecurity information system that can be used to collect and analyse data across sectors and on the functions and services of the newly established Local Land Services.

The key issues for discussion at the meeting related to:

- the continuation of reform of the interstate trading system through consideration of a national trade framework and its application
- the importance of a national approach to biosecurity planning, pest risk analysis and pest prioritisation to provide a solid foundation for national biosecurity activities and to support sharing of effort and clarifying responsibilities
- emergency preparedness and response arrangements for a number of pests, including Karnal bunt and cucumber green mottle mosaic virus, and for pests in the Torres Strait
- consideration of the most effective strategies to facilitate end-user uptake of research outcomes and ensure researchers that identify new potential plant pests report their detections in a timely manner.

Specific issues considered by the Committee at the meeting are detailed below.

▪ National policy and strategy

The Committee agreed to map national biosecurity arrangements and supporting documentation to facilitate consideration and identification of priority areas and activities for national effort. Further work will now be progressed to ensure national biosecurity activities undertaken by governments are better coordinated and targeted to the areas that matter most.

The Committee were also updated on the review of the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy (NPBS) being facilitated by Plant Health Australia (PHA) and will provide feedback on the findings of the review and the priorities and implementation arrangements proposed by PHA to deliver on the strategy over the coming years.

The Committee also considered implementation arrangements for the *National Surveillance and Diagnostic Framework* and the *National Framework for Management of Established Pests and Diseases of National Significance* developed under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity. This advice was requested by the National Biosecurity Committee and will ensure these important reforms can be delivered in the plant biosecurity sector. The plant biosecurity sector is perhaps ahead of the game in terms of surveillance and diagnostics as the National Plant Biosecurity Diagnostic Strategy and National Plant Biosecurity Surveillance Strategy will effectively deliver the requirements of the *National Surveillance and Diagnostic Framework*.

The Committee also agreed to review and investigate mechanisms to enhance communication and engagement with stakeholders—including industry and environment groups—to ensure that stakeholders are engaged appropriately in its work.

▪ Risk analysis, trade and market access

The Committee discussed the progress of a number of activities to reform trade arrangements. The first of these was consideration of the outcomes of a Department of Agriculture graduate project to analyse opportunities to harmonise and/or streamline trade processes for seed potatoes. The outcomes from this work will be further analysed before any recommendations for reform are proposed.

The Committee also discussed the review currently being undertaken to ensure that the information and processes supporting area freedom arrangements is current and nationally consistent where possible. This builds on the Committee's previous work to develop an area freedom framework consistent with ISPM-4.

The Committee also approved a proposal to recognise and progressively implement a system for the issuance of electronic certification under Interstate Certification Assurance accreditations. This was the culmination of work by the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries to trial the generation of electronic Plant Health Assurance Certificates.

▪ Diagnostics and Surveillance

The Committee acknowledged the proficiency testing program delivered through the Subcommittee on Plant Health Diagnostics and agreed to continue to support ongoing participation in the program. At a national level the program provides an indication of national diagnostic capability and can be used to confirm reference specimens—ensuring the integrity of our diagnostics.

The Committee endorsed the *National Protocols for Gypsy Moth Surveillance* which will improve the capacity of the national surveillance program to detect exotic gypsy moth incursions through effective, science based trapping. This is the first national surveillance protocol and is a significant achievement in building national capability and capacity in surveillance.

▪ Fruit Fly Management

The Committee were updated on a number of pest management programs and activities including: the progress in transitioning the *Long-term Containment Strategy for Exotic Fruit Flies in Torres Strait* to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed; and the work being undertaken by the National Fruit Fly Strategy Advisory Committee.

The Committee agreed to adopt a nationally consistent approach to the nomenclature of *Bactrocera dorsalis*. The previously named species: *B. papayae* – Asian papaya fruit fly; *B. philippinensis* – Philippine fruit fly; and *B. invadens* – invasive fruit fly are no longer recognised as distinct biological species and the correct name to apply to specimens previously assigned to these species is now *B. dorsalis* – Oriental fruit fly. This follows publication of research in the renowned journal, *Systematic Entomology*.

▪ Bee Biosecurity

The Committee were also updated on the work being undertaken by the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) in establishing the National Bee Biosecurity Program and the Code of Practice. The Committee noted that the honey bee industry were a proactive example of an agricultural industry looking to work with governments to create an effective industry/government biosecurity partnership and agreed to continue to support this industry initiative.

▪ Emergency preparedness and response

The Committee discussed two proposals to enhance administrative arrangements for emergency response. The Committee agreed to guidance developed by DPIE Victoria to support decision making and greater consistency on reporting new pest detections by jurisdictions. Roles and responsibilities of the PHC subcommittees during an emergency response were also clarified so that the integrity of governance processes during an emergency response are not compromised.

A report describing the findings, recommendations and benefits of the recent study tour to the USA to look at citrus biosecurity was presented and discussed. This study tour was a great initiative by Citrus Australia and has significantly enhanced awareness and understanding of two key biosecurity threats to the citrus industry—Huanglongbing and Asian Citrus Psyllid.

The Committee noted the work of the Karnal bunt Working Group which is developing a risk management strategy for Karnal bunt. This strategy is being developed in consultation with all the affected stakeholders and will culminate in a simulation exercise to test the strategy.

▪ Research, Development, Innovation and Extension

The Committee noted the work of the Plant Biosecurity RD&E Strategy Implementation Committee and agreed to contribute to that committee's work program. An update on the progress in establishing end user advocates for the Plant Biosecurity CRC that facilitate and drive end user adoption and uptake of research outcomes was also provided. The Committee acknowledged the importance of maintaining links into the R,D&E arena.