



## Plant Health Committee Communiqué—PHC47

The Plant Health Committee (PHC) held its forty-seventh meeting in the Yarra Valley, Victoria in June 2015. During the meeting, two field trips were undertaken: the first to a vineyard in the Maroondah Phylloxera Infested Zone to discuss the challenges faced by growers within that zone; the second to Dalton Reserve, Harkaway, to see the *Marchalina hellenica* eradication programme first hand. The field trips were extremely informative and demonstrate the breadth and depth of the national plant biosecurity system and the issues plant health managers deal with.

The key issues for discussion at the meeting related to:

- application of the draft *National Framework for Management of Established Pests and Diseases of National Significance* in the plant biosecurity sector
- interstate trade reform and progress of recent initiatives in strengthening, streamlining and harmonising trade processes
- implementation of the National Minimum Data Standard for Plant Health Surveillance
- progress in the development of the Beekeeping Code of Practice and other honey bee management activities
- progress in enhancing preparedness for Karnal Bunt.

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

### ▪ National policy and strategy

The Committee discussed application of the draft *National Framework for Management of Established Pests and Diseases of National Significance* in the plant biosecurity sector and recent initiatives, which relate to this framework such as the development of a national management plan for Cucumber Green Mottle Mosaic Virus, which will ensure the continued national coordinated management of this pest. Advice from the Committee will be provided to the National Biosecurity Committee on how best to apply the framework in the plant biosecurity sector.

The Committee noted the review of the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy has been finalised by Plant Health Australia and an associated implementation plan developed. The implementation plan provides guidance to stakeholders on key activities that will deliver on Strategy recommendations over the next five years. Further discussion on the actions for governments will be held at the next meeting, once the detail has been worked through by members.

### ▪ Risk analysis, trade and market access

The Committee continued discussions on the progress of the initiatives undertaken over the last 12 months to reform trade arrangements. One of the focus areas for these deliberations has been arrangements for seed potatoes and, to this end, Dr Doris Blaesing (RM Consulting Group) provided a presentation on the Horticulture Innovation Australia Inc. (HIA) seed potato certification review project. This has been a good initiative, and the Committee is interested to see what key stakeholders working in this area think of the findings.

Another key focus area has been to strengthen the information and processes supporting area freedom arrangements. The arrangements developed are consistent with ISPM-4 and over the last 8 months have been successfully embedded in jurisdiction processes. At the meeting, the Committee considered the application of these arrangements to emergency response situations and agreed to requirements in this area.

A new initiative to improve the use of third party services to undertake specific biosecurity functions was discussed and will be worked through using crop monitors and fruit fly surveillance as case studies.

The Committee noted the development of risk based approach towards the management of Potato Spindle Tuber Viroid (PSTVd) within the ViCSPA certified seed programme and feedback received on the status of this disease from other industry groups. This work will be integrated into current national efforts to develop a national management plan for PSTVd

The Committee also discussed fruit fly management, including re-confirming eastern Australia as being free from Mediterranean fruit fly in accordance with the requirements of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures 4 (*Requirements for the Establishment of Pest Free Areas*).

The Committee agreed to roll over remaining funds allocated to the *Quarantine Domestic* communication program until June 2017. This will ensure that activities focused on raising awareness and understanding of domestic quarantine requirements continue.

The Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) Scheme is a key component of domestic trade arrangements and so it is important that it continues to meet biosecurity requirements. The Committee discussed selected recent non-compliances within the ICA Scheme and will further investigate the extent of non-compliances including whether they are due to systemic issues in the scheme or to failures in specific treatment requirements.

#### ▪ **Diagnostics and Surveillance**

The committee discussed the benefits of nationally consistent standards to capture surveillance data and agreed to the progressive implementation of the National Minimum Data Standard for Plant Pest Surveillance to ensure surveillance data shared at the national level is comprehensive.

#### ▪ **Management of pests**

The Committee noted the progress achieved by the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council in working towards seeking national industry endorsement for the proposed National Bee Biosecurity Program and the Biosecurity Code of Practice, and that it effectively complemented the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program. The Committee also noted that the honey bee industry were an example of an agricultural industry demonstrating leadership on biosecurity and looking to work with governments proactively to create an effective industry/government biosecurity partnership. The Committee agreed to continue to support the honeybee industry in the implementation and delivery of the National Bee Biosecurity Program and the Biosecurity Code of Practice.

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

#### ▪ **Emergency preparedness and response**

The Committee discussed guidance material to support decision making on whether a pest falls under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed or National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement. Clarity on this is important to enable timely decision making during a response.

#### ▪ **Research, Development, Innovation and Extension**

The Committee were provided with updates on the work being done in the research space through the Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre and Plant Biosecurity R,D&E Strategy Implementation Committee.