



2 December 2002

PLANT BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2002/47

CLONAL GRASSES CONSULTANCY REPORT

This Plant Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (PBPM) invites stakeholders to comment on the report of a consultancy commissioned by Biosecurity Australia on viruses, phytoplasmas and spiroplasmas of clonal grasses (including sugarcane) and their diagnosis.

Biosecurity Australia (BA) aims to facilitate the safe importation of new genetic material of grass species, including sugarcane. Importation of grasses poses particular difficulties for quarantine authorities as many grasses are potential hosts of several viruses and virus-like pathogens that are difficult to detect. Due to industry requests to import high-risk clonal grasses, BA is reviewing the import and post-entry quarantine (PEQ) conditions for vegetatively propagated clonal grasses relating to viruses and virus-like pathogens.

As part of this review, it was necessary to identify the risks associated with imports and assess options to diagnose and manage those risks. Given the highly specialised nature of the work needed to underpin a review, BA commissioned consultants from the Australian National University to undertake the preliminary technical work.

The consultants were commissioned to:

- clarify and update the taxonomy of clonal grass species of most interest to Australian importers and industry;
- document data on the viruses, viroids, phytoplasmas, spiroplasmas and virus-like pathogens that infect them; and
- identify and evaluate the diagnostic testing options to detect those pathogens of quarantine concern.

This consultancy has been completed and the consultancy report, *Viruses, Phytoplasmas and Spiroplasmas of Clonal Grasses and Their Diagnosis*, is now available from the AFFA website at www.affa.gov.au/plantbiosecurity or copies can be requested from Technical and Administrative Services.

You are invited to comment on the technical issues raised in the consultancy report by close of business 29 January 2003. Comments should be forwarded to Technical and Administrative Services at the address overleaf. Stakeholders are encouraged to make submissions electronically.

If you wish to suggest inclusion of an additional stakeholder in our distribution list for this policy review, or if you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please provide details to Technical and Administrative Services at the address below.

Following consultation with stakeholders on the Consultancy Report, BA plans to hold a workshop early next year to discuss a number of related issues regarding importation of germplasm of grasses, including sugarcane. The objective of the workshop will be to discuss detection methods for quarantine viruses and phytoplasmas of grasses, and post-entry quarantine protocols to address the quarantine risks. If you wish to participate in the workshop, please reply to Technical and Administrative Services at the address below by close of business 29 January 2003, and we will send you further details.

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to Plant Biosecurity Policy Memoranda will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Information on all Policy Reviews and Import Risk Analyses being conducted by Plant Biosecurity is available on the web at <http://www.affa.gov.au/plantbiosecurity>.

I look forward to receiving your comments on the consultancy report.

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