

# **Eminent Scientists Group**

**REPORT OF THE EMINENT SCIENTISTS GROUP ON  
THE IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS OF APPLES FROM NEW ZEALAND**

**TO**

**THE DIRECTOR OF ANIMAL AND PLANT QUARANTINE**

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## **Introduction**

The then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss MP, announced on 15 July 2004 that new measures would be introduced to increase confidence in the administration of the import risk analysis (IRA) process conducted by Biosecurity Australia (BA). One of the new measures he announced was the establishment of an Eminent Scientists Group (the ESG) to review draft final IRA reports before their release to stakeholders.

This report by the ESG is made in accordance with its Terms of Reference, which are to:

- review the draft final IRA report prepared by the IRA team to ensure that the IRA team has adequately considered all technical submissions received from stakeholders during the formal consultation period on the draft IRA, and
- within 60 days of being presented with the draft final IRA report, prepare a report to the Director of Quarantine on their findings and recommend any action considered necessary to overcome any identified deficiencies. The ESG will provide a copy of the report to the Chief Executive of BA.

On 21 July 2006, BA formally tasked the ESG with reviewing the draft final IRA report on apples from New Zealand and requested that the ESG report its findings to the Director of Quarantine within 60 days of receiving the draft final IRA report. The report was received by members of the ESG on 1 August 2006.

To facilitate deliberations, the ESG was provided with four sets of documents:

- Revised draft IRA report for apples from New Zealand (December 2005)
- Draft final IRA report for apples from New Zealand (July 2006)
- 40 submissions from stakeholders (following the release of the revised draft IRA report in December 2005)
- A summary table setting out stakeholder comments and BA's responses to those comments (July 2006).

Following its out of session consideration of these documents, the ESG met in Canberra on 21 August and 14 & 15 September 2006 to prepare its findings. During the meeting held on 21 August, the ESG sought a statistical presentation from BA on the semi-quantitative framework used for the evaluation.

The ESG noted that a number of stakeholders had raised issues that revolved around the definition of Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP). The ESG considers that this issue has been addressed in the draft final IRA report.

This assessment by the ESG provides observations on BA's treatment of stakeholder comments in the development of the draft final IRA report, and on the contribution of stakeholders to the consultative process generally. The report was agreed to by ESG members out of session.

## **Assessment**

The ESG notes that in addition to the work that has been done to encompass the currently known science dealing with pests and diseases of apples that might be imported from New Zealand, BA has responded to a considerable number of stakeholder submissions by including additional information in the July 2006 draft final IRA report. The ESG compliments BA both on its response to these submissions and on the comprehensive nature of its examination of relevant pests and diseases set out in Part C of the report.

The ESG also notes numerous requests by stakeholders for additional research. Whilst recognising that there will always be opportunities to undertake new research, the ESG acknowledges that BA is required to conduct IRAs to the limit of the currently known science. In any event, the references encompassed, updated in the July 2006 draft final IRA report, indicate that even the most recent published material has been brought to bear on the topic.

The ESG notes the comprehensive nature of submissions by most respondents, particularly Apple and Pear Australia Limited, New Zealand MAF and the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The ESG considers that the responses generated as a result of these submissions have made a positive contribution to the science underpinning the analysis process.

As a result of suggestions made at the industry forum held in Canberra in July 2006, Apple and Pear Australia Limited submitted a summary submission of their very detailed earlier submission, both of which were considered by the ESG.

## **Conclusion**

The ESG concludes unanimously that the New Zealand apples IRA team has properly considered the 40 submissions received from stakeholders on the revised draft IRA report.