ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION PAPER – COMMENCEMENT OF A REVIEW OF BIOSECURITY IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESH AVOCADO FRUIT FROM CHILE

The commencement of this risk analysis is in response to a request for market access for fresh avocado fruit (Persea americana) from Chile into Australia. Market access for fresh avocado fruit has been Chile’s highest priority request for horticultural export to Australia since 2006.

There are two main types of risk analyses used by the department:

- a Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis (BIRA) which is conducted through a regulated process provided for in the Biosecurity Act 2015 and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016, and
- a non-regulated risk analysis, such as a review of biosecurity import requirements.

A preliminary assessment of the pests associated with fresh avocado fruit from Chile has identified that the potential pests of quarantine concern are the same, or of the same pest groups, as those associated with other horticultural commodities that have been assessed previously by Australia and for which import conditions exist.

Given the similarity of pests of concern, and that there are appropriate risk management measures already established for these pests or pest groups, the risk analysis for fresh avocado fruit from Chile will be progressed as a review of biosecurity import requirements (a non-regulated risk analysis), consistent with the Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis Guidelines 2016.

Avocado industry in Chile

Chile is one of the largest producers of avocado in the world. However, the area planted with avocado in Chile has been decreasing since 2007 due to a number of factors including drought and chilling in major production regions.

In 2016, approximately 65 per cent of Chile’s avocados were produced in the Valparaiso region followed by 15 per cent in both Coquimbo and Metropolitan. Chile’s total avocado production was around 175,000 tonnes in 2015–16 and 215,000 tonnes in 2016–17.

The main avocado cultivar grown in Chile is Hass, which accounts for around 88 per cent of production. Hass is also the main cultivar for export. All avocado cultivars from Chile will be considered in the risk analysis.

Chile currently exports avocados to a number of countries including Argentina, China, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Over the last five years Chile exported an average of around 105,000 tonnes of avocados per year with approximately 147,000 tonnes exported in 2016. Chile’s main avocado export season is typically from September to March.
Australian avocado imports

Australia currently only imports avocados from New Zealand, mainly from September to March. From 2013–14 to 2015–16, Australia imported between 13,000 to 20,000 tonnes of avocados per year.

Avocado industry in Australia

Australian avocados are available all year round with the major harvesting season varying between production areas. Avocados are produced mainly in Queensland during the winter months, with major growing regions in the Atherton Tablelands (northern Queensland) and around Bundaberg/Childers (central Queensland), and in Western Australia during the summer months, particularly around Pemberton/Manjimup (southwest Western Australia). Smaller volumes are also produced in northern New South Wales and the Sunraysia and Riverland areas.

There are approximately 850 commercial avocado growers in Australia. Most farms are located in Queensland, followed by Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. In 2016–17, Australia produced around 66,000 tonnes of avocados.

The main avocado variety grown in Australia is Hass with over 80 per cent of production, followed by Shepard with 10 to 15 per cent. In Queensland, Hass avocados are mainly harvested from April to November, in New South Wales from June to December, and in Western Australia from September to February.

Australia is not a major exporter of avocados, with exports of around 2,300 tonnes in 2016–17. The Australian avocado industry has developed an export development plan to increase Australian avocado exports around the world and is actively pursuing market access to a number of markets including Thailand.

On 26 January 2018, Australian avocado producers gained access to Japan for hard, mature Hass avocados from areas not affected by Queensland fruit fly. This presents an exciting new opportunity for the industry in Western Australia, in particular, to increase exports into this important market.

Trade between Australia and Chile

Chile is Australia’s third largest trading partner in Latin America. In 2016, the total value of goods Australia exported to Chile was approximately $469 million. The main export commodity was coal. Australia’s imports from Chile over the same timeframe were worth approximately $533 million. Main imports included copper, and other ores and concentrates.

For agricultural products in 2016, Chile’s exports to Australia amounted to $237 million and the key products were prepared fruits and nuts, sawnwood, plywood and wood pulp. Australia’s exports to Chile were worth around $13 million. Australia’s main export products were paper, cheese and seeds for sowing.
Preliminary assessment of pests on fresh avocado fruit from Chile

A preliminary assessment identified that the pests associated with fresh avocado fruit from Chile do not pose different biosecurity risks to those associated with other horticultural commodities.

The preliminary assessment of the pests associated with avocados from Chile indicates that the potential arthropod pests of quarantine concern that require further assessment include Mediterranean fruit fly, scale insects, a mealybug, thrips and mites. The assessment will help determine which potential pests are pests of quarantine concern that require phytosanitary measures to achieve Australia’s appropriate level of protection.

The quarantine pests associated with fresh avocado fruit from Chile (as assessed to date) are expected to require similar risk management measures to those already used to control these or similar pests on other horticultural commodities.

Next steps

A draft report of this review of biosecurity import requirements is currently scheduled to be published on the department’s website, www.agriculture.gov.au, before the end of 2018. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to submit comments on the draft report for a period of 60 days.

All comments will be assessed and, where relevant, amendments will be incorporated into the final report.

The recommendations in the final report will reflect the completion of the risk analysis for fresh avocado fruit from Chile. The recommended measures will have been assessed as appropriate to manage any potential risks to Australia’s biosecurity presented by the import of fresh avocado fruit from Chile.

If you would like to know more about this risk analysis or the risk analysis process please email plantstakeholders@agriculture.gov.au or phone +61 2 6272 5094.