



Fresh date fruit from the Middle East and North Africa region **Biosecurity**

July 2018



Key facts

- The department released the draft report for the review of biosecurity import requirements for fresh date fruit from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region on 31 July 2018.
- Stakeholders can submit comments on the draft report during the 60 calendar day public consultation period, closing 28 September 2018.
- The final report will be published after consideration of comments on the draft report. The department expects to publish the report before the end of 2018.

Risk analysis for fresh date fruit from the Middle East and North Africa region

As a World Trade Organization member, Australia is required to assess market access proposals and develop the least trade restrictive and scientifically justified import conditions. The same scientific principles are used by our trading partners when assessing Australian commodities.

Australia currently permits imports of fresh date fruit from the United States of America, and frozen and dried dates from all countries, provided they meet Australia's biosecurity import requirements.

This risk analysis was initiated in response to market access requests from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia for fresh dates (fruit with greater than 30 per cent moisture content) to Australia.

This risk analysis was expanded to cover the MENA region, which produces the majority of the world's date fruit. For the purposes of this risk analysis, the MENA region includes the above countries as well as Algeria, Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Syria, Turkey and Yemen.

The approach to conducting a risk analysis for a geographical region is an innovative approach funded by the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper to increase the efficiency of the risk analysis process.

The draft report identifies eight quarantine pests associated with fresh dates from the MENA region, that require risk management measures to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection.

The pests are spider mite (*Eutetranychus palmatus*), date dust mite (*Oligonychus afrasiaticus*), Banks grass mite (*Oligonychus pratensis*), vine mealybug (*Planococcus ficus*), citriculus mealybug (*Pseudococcus cryptus*), Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*), peach fruit fly (*Bactrocera zonata*) and Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*).

The proposed risk management measures for these pests include:

- consignment freedom for spider mites and mealybugs verified by pre-export visual inspection, and remedial action if found
- area freedom for fruit flies, which may include specifically identified pest free areas, pest free places of production, and/or pest free production sites, or fruit treatment considered to be effective against all life stages of fruit flies (for example, cold disinfestation treatment or irradiation).

Process for a risk analysis

The objective of undertaking a risk analysis is to ensure that any fresh products imported into Australia are free from unwanted pests and diseases. The department initially identifies pests and diseases associated with fruit or vegetable production and export in the source country that are not present in Australia.

The assessment includes analysis of the potential pests of concern and recommends risk management measures if required. If there are no available risk management measures to effectively manage particular biosecurity risks trade is not permitted until suitable measures are identified.

The department will verify commercial production, packing, and export practices in the source country before determining any phytosanitary measures that are to be applied to mitigate any potential risks that do not achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection.

How stakeholders can contribute

Stakeholders are invited to comment on the draft report during the 60 calendar day public consultation period, which closes on 28 September 2018. Stakeholders can submit their comments via the department's website <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/plant/fresh-date-middle-east-north-africa>. The final report will be published after consideration of stakeholder comments.

Australia – Middle East and North Africa region trade

The Middle East and North Africa region is an important export market for Australia, with Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Tunisia alone importing approximately \$2.5 billion worth of Australian products in 2015. The main Australian agricultural exports are wheat, sheep meat and pulses.

Date production in the Middle East and North Africa region

The Middle East and North African region is the main date producing region of the world, producing around 7 million tonnes of dates in 2015 ([FAOSTAT](#)). The harvesting period for the Middle East and North Africa region is from June to December.

Date production in Australia


The Australian date industry is relatively small, with fewer than 25 growers producing around 13 tonnes of dates annually (RIRDC, 2011). The industry exported 205kg of fresh dates in 2014-15. With production mainly centred in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, the harvesting period is between February and April, although it can extend into June.

Further information

The department will share information and answer questions relating to this risk analysis at any time during the process. New scientific information will also be considered at any time. Further information on the risk analysis can be found at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/risk-analysis/plant/fresh-date-middle-east-north-africa> or by contacting the department.

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