



21 September 2018

ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION PAPER – COMMENCEMENT OF A REVIEW OF BIOSECURITY IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESH *CAPSICUM SPP.* FRUIT FROM FIJI, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SAMOA, SOLOMON ISLANDS, TONGA AND VANUATU

The commencement of this risk analysis is in response to a request for market access for fresh *Capsicum spp.* fruit (chillies, capsicums and peppers) from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu (hereafter referred to as Pacific Island countries) into Australia. While the Pacific Island countries are mainly interested in market access for fresh chillies, the risk analysis will also consider other *Capsicum spp.* varieties commonly known as capsicums and peppers.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) receives funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, via the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA) program, to consider market access requests from Pacific Island countries and implement biosecurity policies that ensure safe agricultural trade with Australia. Increasing trade opportunities for horticultural produce in the region assists to boost economic development. The review of biosecurity import requirements for fresh *Capsicum spp.* fruit is being undertaken as a PHAMA priority.

There are two types of risk analyses conducted 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 *Capsicum spp.* fruit from the Pacific Island countries has identified that the potential pests of biosecurity concern are the same, or of the same pest groups, as those that have been assessed previously by the department on other fresh horticultural goods.

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 *Capsicum spp.* fruit from the Pacific Island countries will be progressed as a review of biosecurity import requirements (a non-regulated risk analysis), consistent with the [Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis Guidelines 2016](#).

***Capsicum spp.* (chillies, capsicums and peppers)**

There are five major species in the *Capsicum* genus that are cultivated domestically for human consumption and referred to as domesticated species. The five recognised domesticated species are: *Capsicum annum*, *Capsicum baccatum*, *Capsicum chinense*, *Capsicum frutescens* and *Capsicum pubescens*. These species include various chilli varieties, bell peppers (also known as capsicums) and other sweet peppers. The assessment will consider all five major species (including all types and varieties of these species). Other *Capsicum* species that are not

cultivated for human consumption, referred to as wild species, are excluded from the risk analysis as there is insufficient information available on pests and diseases to assess the biosecurity risks – these species are not likely to be grown commercially in the Pacific Island countries.

Capsicum spp. production in the Pacific Island countries

Agriculture remains a significant sector of the economies of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Commercial production of chillies, capsicums and other peppers is mostly small scale, for sale in the domestic market or for processing (drying or freezing). While most growers still undertake field production in small plots, there is some larger scale intensive production in enclosed screen-houses.

The majority of chilli and capsicum exports are in the form of processed products, particularly dried spices (chilli powder, chilli flakes, whole dried chillies, paprika) or frozen chillies and capsicums. There are a number of growers in the region that produce organically-certified dried chillies and paprika for export.

Limited access to international markets means that production of chillies, capsicums and peppers is mainly for domestic consumption. However, Fiji and Tonga export small volumes of fresh chillies to New Zealand.

Capsicum and chilli industry in Australia

Chillies and capsicums are grown all year round in Australia. The Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook indicates production of chillies was 2,213 tonnes in 2016-17 (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited 2017). Production of capsicums was 73,488 tonnes in 2016-17 (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited 2017).

Two thirds of the total capsicum and chilli production occurs in Queensland, with major centres of production being Bowen and Bundaberg. Carnarvon is the main area for capsicum production in Western Australia (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited 2017).

Australia's main export markets for fresh *Capsicum* spp. fruit in 2016-17 were New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji and Brunei. Around 350 tonnes of capsicums and three tonnes of chillies were exported in this period (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited 2017).

Australian capsicum and chilli imports

Australia currently permits the importation of fresh *Capsicum* spp. fruit (*Capsicum annuum* and *Capsicum frutescens*) from New Zealand and greenhouse-grown capsicums (*Capsicum annuum*) from the Republic of Korea.

Import volumes of fresh capsicums into Australia are relatively small in comparison to the volumes grown domestically. In 2017, Australia imported around 1,300 tonnes of fresh capsicums, with the vast majority sourced from New Zealand and smaller volumes imported from the Republic of Korea. The importation of *Capsicum* spp. is typically seasonal, with most fruit being imported in the spring/summer months.

A very small amount of fresh chillies (around 14 tonnes) were imported in 2016-17, with larger volumes (nearly 4,000 tonnes) of dried chillies imported in the same period (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited 2017).

Trade between Australia and Pacific Island countries

Australia is a net exporter of agricultural products to Pacific Island countries. For the 2016-17 financial year, the major Australian agricultural exports to the Pacific Island countries included cereals (particularly wheat), dairy products and meat. The main agricultural imports into Australia from the Pacific Island countries were animal feed (copra), animal hides, animal and vegetable oils, coffee, spices, fruit and vegetables. Although Australia mainly exports fresh capsicums to New Zealand, small volumes are also exported to Papua New Guinea, Fiji and New Caledonia.

The potential import volumes of fresh chillies, capsicums and peppers from Pacific Island countries are likely to be small, with chillies being the most likely species exported.

Preliminary assessment of pests on fresh chillies, capsicums and peppers from Pacific Island countries

A preliminary assessment identified that the pests potentially associated with fresh chillies, capsicums and peppers from the Pacific Island countries do not pose different biosecurity risks to those associated with other horticultural goods that have been assessed previously.

The preliminary assessment of the pests associated with chillies, capsicums and peppers from the Pacific Island countries indicates that the potential pests of biosecurity concern that require further assessment include fruit flies, mealybugs, scale insects and a thrips species. The pest risk assessment will determine which potential pests of biosecurity concern will require phytosanitary measures to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection.

The potential pests of biosecurity concern associated with *Capsicum* spp. fruit from Pacific Island countries (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 goods.

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, in the first half of 2019. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to submit comments on the draft report for a period of 60 calendar 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 *Capsicum* spp. fruit from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The recommended measures will have been assessed as scientifically sound and appropriate to manage any potential risks to Australia's biosecurity presented by the import of fresh *Capsicum* spp. fruit from the Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

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.