



Fresh dates from the Middle East and North Africa region **Biosecurity**

February 2019



Key facts

- The department has finalised the risk analysis for the review of biosecurity import requirements for fresh date fruit (greater than 30 percent moisture content) from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
- The final report recommends the importation of loose, fresh dates (greater than 30 percent moisture content) to Australia from all commercial production areas of the MENA region be permitted, subject to a range of biosecurity requirements.
- The final report recommends risk management measures, combined with operational systems, to reduce the risks posed by the identified quarantine pests, to achieve the appropriate level of protection for Australia.

Risk analysis for fresh dates from the MENA region

This risk analysis was conducted to assess 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.

As a World Trade Organization (WTO) member, Australia must meet its international obligations by assessing market access requests (import proposals) and developing the least trade restrictive and scientifically justified import conditions where required. Our trading partners use the same principles when assessing Australian market access requests.

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 is taken to comprise Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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

The department announced the commencement of this risk analysis on 24 August 2016. A draft report was published on the department's website on 31 July 2018 for a 60 calendar day public consultation period. All submissions received during this period were considered when finalising the risk analysis.

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.

Summary of the final report

The final report recommends that the importation of loose, fresh dates (greater than 30% moisture content) to Australia from all commercial production areas of the MENA region be permitted, subject to a range of biosecurity requirements.

The final report for this risk analysis identified eight quarantine pests associated with fresh dates from the MENA region, that require risk management measures. These pests are:

- Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*)
- Peach fruit fly (*Bactrocera zonata*)
- Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*).
- Spider mite (*Eutetranychus palmatus*)
- Date dust mite (*Oligonychus afrasiaticus*)
- Banks grass mite (*Oligonychus pratensis*)
- Vine mealybug (*Planococcus ficus*)
- Citriculus mealybug (*Pseudococcus cryptus*).

The final report recommends a range of risk management measures, combined with operational systems, to reduce the risks posed by the eight quarantine pests and achieve the appropriate level of protection for Australia. These measures 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).

Next steps

The final report reflects the completion of the risk analysis. Before imports can commence the department will:

- verify that a country can action the recommended risk management measures,
- publish import conditions on the Biosecurity Import Conditions System (BICON), and
- issue import permits for trade to commence.


The decision to commence imports to Australia is a commercial decision between an importer in Australia and a supplier in the Middle East or North Africa region who can meet the import conditions.

Further information

Further [information on this risk analysis](#) can be found by clicking the link provided or by contacting the department.

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