



WAFARMERS

Submission to:
**National Environmental Biosecurity Response
Agreement (NEBRA)
Five Year Review**

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Overview

The Western Australian Farmers Federation Inc. (WAFarmers) is the State's largest and most influential member based rural advocacy and service organisation. Founded in 1912, WAFarmers boasts a membership of over 3,600 individual members and 1,300 enterprises, including grain growers, meat and wool producers, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers. Collectively our members are major contributors to the total gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy.

Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental wellbeing of that land and the animals that graze it.

Introduction

WA Farmers Federation (WAFarmers) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments to this important discussion.

Discussion

Australia has acquired a sound reputation for its biosecurity management and enforcement systems and the initial IGAB was supported as an important step towards formalising cooperation between all entities.

That said, it has been acknowledged that there are still some issues to be resolved in terms of developing open and transparent communication channels between all entities involved in the management of biosecurity programs.

WAFarmers is of the view that NEBRA should not be considered in isolation and suggests it should have an interlinking function with other core bodies such as the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA), the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), and Regional Biosecurity Groups, within the broader biosecurity framework.

A biosecurity system operates at its most effective when all stakeholders are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities, and are working collaboratively toward achieving agreed outcomes. NEBRA doesn't at present reflect the relationships and connections between scientists and industry experts and a more co-operative approach would benefit Australia's biosecurity efforts overall, with very little added costs.

Australia still has multiple agencies across the biosecurity spectrum responsible for a range of plant, animal, environmental and human threats. Much work has been done to reform different parts of the biosecurity continuum, yet less on how to integrate and audit these reforms effectively to produce holistic biosecurity strategies in full collaboration with industry and community entities.

It should be recognised that Governments, as is the case with NEBRA, are not the only funding contributors to national biosecurity program and activities. Whilst core government funding is integral to a strong biosecurity system, contributions come through a variety of sources such as:



- community based fee for service charges;
- industry rates, levies or charges;
- landholder rates, levies or charges; and,
- contributions from recreational users.

When considering emergency response mechanisms, some industries such as EADRA and EPPRD have highly detailed and specific cost and responsibility sharing arrangements.

WAFarmers would seek to ensure that NEBRA is able to be triggered for all biosecurity incursions, including unknown pests and diseases that do not have risk and cost benefit analyses. However, it would not support the development of another Research and Development Corporation or the creation of another industry-based levy system specifically for environmental biosecurity purposes aimed at supporting the functions of NEBRA in isolation under cost sharing arrangements.

There is clearly a need for rationalisation and simplification, and WAFarmers is of the opinion that the points outlined above would work towards this consolidation and result in a more cooperative and collaborative biosecurity continuum on a national scale.

Shared cost and responsibility in the future will have to involve many public (government departments) and private entities to ensure adequate resources are available to meet future risks and demands, particularly given changes as a consequence of climate change and global population movement trends.

We believe greater unity and alignment of funds collected for various biosecurity programs at both State and National levels requires reform. For example the roles and responsibility under NEBRA, which allows for financial contributions by private beneficiaries is not defined, in contrast to the cost and responsibilities defined in EPPRD and EADRA.

NEBRA has been involved in five emergency incidents but private beneficiaries have not been privy to the audits or reviews of these activities. Secondly, we are concerned with the longevity and/or turnover of jurisdictional representatives who may have limited expertise in one field. We recommend NEBRA should consider developing a documented succession plan to ensure continuity for decision making.

WAFarmers certainly believes it would be beneficial to increase the role of non-government advisors in the decision making process. For example, who is monitoring local incursions and where is this information held. What engagement is had with regional NRM/ Landcare and biosecurity groups? What are the standard operating procedures for pre-incursion responses?

Shared training and resources across jurisdictions would be beneficial to all parties and would certainly help preparedness for emergency threats. This was clearly demonstrated recently with all jurisdictions (government and non-government) working together for Exercise Apollo. There is a need for clarity around the threshold which triggers a NEBRA response.

At present, there is no single data point for the collection of information, although we are of the understanding that there is data sharing. We believe there is merit in streamlining data access, for example, Western Australia already has a list of declared pests, weeds and diseases.



WAFarmers would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the issues and recommendations raised in this paper with you at a later date.