

“KEEPING AUSTRALIA’S INTERNATIONAL TRADE MOVING”



FTA
FREIGHT & TRADE ALLIANCE



Australian Peak Shippers
Association Inc. (APSA)

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BIOSECURITY THREATS AND PROCESSING DELAYS ARE ADDING COSTS AND INFLATIONARY PRESSURES TO SUPPLY CHAINS

As if the energy crisis, labour shortage, rising interest rates and rapidly increasing inflation was not enough, the federal government has inherited another dilemma in determining how they manage serious biosecurity risks whilst minimising impacts on legitimate trade.

Australia has serious biosecurity risks on its doorstep – should these cross our international borders and spread, it will have devastating impacts on our agricultural industries, environment, health and economy.

Some of the notable risks include Varoa mite, Japanese encephalitis, African Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth, Lumpy Skin Disease, Khapra Beetle and the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.

The public will soon be made aware of what’s happening. Just this week the federal government advised that every flight coming back into the country from Indonesia is to be boarded by a biosecurity officer and a message will be played that is dedicated to the issues around Foot and Mouth Disease in Indonesia.

Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA), the peak industry body representing customs brokers, freight forwarders and importers, has raised concerns that some of the new and emerging risks may take limited biosecurity resources away from business-as-usual trade facilitation activities.

FTA Director Paul Zalai says the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry use labour intensive processes with biosecurity officers physically assessing import documentation and selecting consignments on a set criterion for inspection.

“It is a broken and hopelessly outdated system unable to keep pace with increases and changing patterns of international trade – despite the best efforts of officers, the department cannot keep up and industry is paying the price.”

“Whilst document assessment processing times fluctuate, inspections and the issuing of import permits can take weeks to complete.” Zalai said

According to the FTA this is causing significant delays for importers to gain access to cargo, adding to storage costs and generating significant container detention fees administered by and payable to foreign owned shipping lines.

“Shipping lines don’t care why there is a delay in returning empty containers yet insist they are returned within prescribed timeframes to add to their stockpile congesting our port precincts.”

FTA state that biosecurity delays are one of many causes of container detention fees that are conservatively costing importers \$500 million per annum. This is on top of surcharges, terminal access charges and record high freight rates that are rapidly escalating supply chain costs and adding to inflationary pressures.

The FTA acknowledges that the department is co-designing solutions with industry including examination of commercial practices to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading contaminating pests and therefore minimise the associated regulatory consequences for Australian commerce.

“These longer term strategies have the potential to set a benchmark of global best practice in safeguarding against biosecurity risk whilst facilitating legitimate trade. Whilst applauding and supporting these initiatives, we urge the Federal Government to introduce immediate relief measures.”

Zalai added that if funds are the problem, then the government should talk to industry.

“We well and truly understand the need to protect against biosecurity risks and would be prepared to pay additional transactional fees on the proviso that this directly translates to commensurate improved and immediate trade facilitation measures.”

LONGER TERM BIOSECURITY REFORMS

- Finalising the pilot of remote inspection capabilities to increase inspection efficiency and mitigate workplace health and safety risks.
- Completing the trial of X-ray applications to automate the identification and capture of seed packets coming through international mail gateways.
- Continuing the adoption of modern diagnostic technologies to improve operational service delivery and risk management, including partnering with key stakeholders to pilot High-Throughput Sequencing in post-entry quarantine.
- Delivering a national environmental DNA (eDNA) testing program to assist border surveillance for key exotic pests, supported by a partnership with University of Canberra to establish a national eDNA reference centre.
- Rolling out the Biosecurity self-service online inspection booking portal.
- Progressing automated import document assessment (self-assessed clearance and minimum documentation assessment processes) and enhancements to COLS lodgement process.
- Trialling mobile handheld technologies to evaluate their effectiveness as tools to detect key passenger pests more effectively.
- Partnering with industry to deliver a prototype sensor that identifies and quantifies residual fumigants on sea containers in real time and identifies biosecurity pests of concern.
- Piloting automating shipping container screening using hyperspectral cameras attached to port cranes.
- Completing testing of tools to improve monitoring of compliance with aircraft disinfection requirements.
- Progressing the development of a tool using artificial intelligence to enable real-time identification of brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) and exotic bees.
- Implementing interoperable system functionality to provide for accurate, consistent and current taxonomic information to support regulatory decision-making.
- Proof of concept to digitise the Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code)

ABOUT FTA

Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) is Australia’s leading representative body for the international supply chain sector bringing together importers, exporters, customs brokers, freight forwarders, logistics service providers and industry groups. FTA also manages the Secretariat for the Australian Peak Shippers’ Association (APSA) being the peak body as designated by the Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Transport to protect the interests of Australia’s cargo owners and shippers in respect to shipping and international logistics services.

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