



Submission

National Biosecurity Strategy

March 2022

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Australian Grape & Wine welcomes the opportunity to share the views of the wine sector on the National Biosecurity Strategy. We support the strong sentiment to involve stakeholders and expect that agricultural sectors, including ours, will be important contributors to determining plans for action under the six priority areas. We look forward to participating in the collaborative process outlined in the strategy for further development of actions. An effective, and well-funded implementation plan with clear accountability will be key to its success.

Plant industries are forecast to contribute a record \$43 billion in 2021–22 towards total agriculture production of \$78 billion (ABARES 2021–22). The ability of agriculture to reach its \$100 billion target by 2030 requires that plant industries can continue to grow productivity. It has been estimated that the arrival of Australia's number one plant industry pest, Xylella, could cost the wine sector alone up to \$7.9 billion over 50 years. We remain concerned about whether border security is adequately resourced to limit this risk, and should it fail, whether the capacity exists to manage the spread of such an incursion to minimise net cost to plant industries.

The strategy should go further towards recognising and addressing the current weaknesses in the system.

The frequency of pests evading border biosecurity is rapidly escalating, and lead agencies are not appropriately resourced to deal with the increasing workload that this creates. In comparison to livestock, plant industries are exposed to significantly more exotic plant pest incursions annually, however, receive a much smaller portion of biosecurity funding.

The strategy should emphasise the need for a more sustainable funding base for the national biosecurity system.

An even more significant inequity is that those responsible for the introduction of exotic plant pests are not contributing to dealing with the consequences. A case in point is that the wine sector has contributed significant levy payer funds towards the recent eradication efforts for Brown Marmorated Stink Bug despite it having arrived on general cargo mostly unrelated to wine production. The decision by the Government not to proceed with the onshore biosecurity levy calls for an alternative mechanism to be considered in the immediate future, to ensure that biosecurity risk is appropriately resourced and the 'risk creator' bears a fair proportion of the cost.

The strategy should be more clear in terms of the need for an equitable funding model between risk creators, risk beneficiaries and governments.

SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

The proposed vision and purpose are a good reflection of why biosecurity is so important to all Australians. It is especially important to our agriculture sectors and the regional economies that agriculture supports. The fact that the system should be risk based and underpinned by science is supported.

Regional freedom from established endemic pests is highly valued by businesses operating in pest free areas, yet the strategy scope excludes endemic species. Whilst it would be unreasonable to include all endemic pests, there are a suite of nationally significant endemic species such as Phylloxera that require a national approach to management. There remains a very strong business case for investment into managing these pests, as the risk of spread is significantly higher and in many cases less complex to mitigate against. Australian Grape & Wine questions the exclusion of this group of pests from the strategy.

ROLES WITHIN THE BIOSECURITY SYSTEM

The strategy should attempt to assign greater ownership of, and responsibility for, the activities that take place within the national system so as to ensure that each participant is accountable to the role they play. The concept of shared responsibility is a wonderful aspiration however remains poorly understood. This confusion is exacerbated when multiple parties are assigned to the same responsibilities without any serious endeavours to address the 'how?' .

A description of each of the system participants would also add clarity, for example by outlining what differentiates, 'industry' from 'businesses'. Presumably 'industry' relates to those involved in the importation of goods into Australia (risk creators) as well as agricultural sectors. Yet the role of these two system participants is quite distinct. If diagram 15 is to be included, it should provide additional information describing the system participants and the nature of their responsibilities.

BIOSECURITY RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As previously stated, failure to acknowledge the risk presented from the spread of nationally significant endemic species into pest free areas is a missed opportunity.

The important risk associated with the global spread of contaminating pests such as BMSB into new trading nations is not clearly conveyed. This situation is a significant contributor to the changing risk environment and one that highlights the need for greater compliance at the nation's borders and a need to continue to develop more efficient detection methods. It also represents a significant change in the system in that the nature of businesses responsible for creating risk is changing.

ACTIONS

Missing from the priority areas is the acknowledgement that prevention and mitigation of exotic pest entry at the national borders is where the greatest returns on investment are achieved. The increased prevalence of pests evading border security is evidence of underinvestment in mitigation which then leads to significant costs in dealing with these disasters.

Priority actions should single out the critical issue of working with international organisations and trading partners to mitigate risk before they reach our shores.

In terms of how we contribute, the wine sector plays a significant role in biosecurity and our sector can demonstrate actions against each responsibility area. For example, the sector regularly prepares for incursions through training and outbreak simulations which in turn increase capability through skills development. The wine sector has also recently developed a Biosecurity Emergency Response Plan to support this preparedness.

Another critical role for our organisation and the businesses we represent is ensuring best practice biosecurity measures are adopted on farm. Wine and winegrape producers are able to certify to a best-practice standard through the sustainability program Sustainable Winegrowing Australia which has an entire module dedicated to biosecurity. This means that best practice measures are made clear to winegrape growers and other relevant players in the supply chain, and improving performance of wine businesses can be monitored over time. Australian Grape & Wine has appointed a National Wine Biosecurity Committee which assists in providing oversight of our National Wine Biosecurity Strategy and in the development and implementation of various other biosecurity protocols and programs.

As a signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) and a member of Plant Health Australia,

Australian Grape & Wine has committed to working closely in partnership with other plant sectors and governments to mitigate biosecurity risk. The sector has invested levy payer funds towards response plans as a result of several exotic incursions.

Our research and development organisation, Wine Australia invests a portion of levy payer funds towards research relating to biosecurity preparedness and management.

Greater collaboration from government will enhance our ability to fulfill our commitment to promoting biosecurity. Actions that increase transparency and availability of data would be welcomed. In particular data relating to incursions at the national border would go a long way towards supporting us to prioritise our preparedness efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The implementation and review of this strategy is fundamental to its success. This requires adequate resourcing and a commitment from the Department for ongoing engagement with all system participants. Identification of success measures is of critical importance and these should be included in this strategy. An implementation plan should also make clear how shared responsibility should play out on the ground and introduce a strong degree of accountability. This accountability is missing from the draft strategy. The implementation plan should be developed in close consultation with system participants. It must contain clear performance indicators that are agreed to by participants and monitored annually.

Contact

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FOR INDUSTRY, BY INDUSTRY

About Australian Grape & Wine

Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated (Australian Grape & Wine) is Australia's national association of winegrape and wine producers. Our activities focus on providing leadership, strategy, advocacy and support that serves Australian wine businesses now and into the future.

We represent the interests of the more than 2,500 winemakers and 5,000 winegrape growers working in Australia. Our role is to help forge a political, social and regulatory environment that enables profitable and sustainable Australian wine businesses. These businesses make a significant contribution to growing regional economies by driving growth in jobs, regional exports and food and wine tourism.

Australian Grape & Wine is recognised as a representative organisation for winegrape and wine producers under the *Wine Australia Act 2013*, and is incorporated under the *SA Associations Incorporation Act 1985*. We work in partnership with the Australian Government to develop and implement policy that is in the best interests of winemakers and winegrape growers across Australia.

Australian Grape & Wine's voluntary membership represents over 75% of the national winegrape crush. We represent small, medium and large winemakers, and winegrape growers from across the country. Over half of the Nation's grapevines are in South Australia and the States wine production is critical to our ability to supply our key export markets. Other benefits of a prosperous South Australian wine sector include the sectors contribution to tourism and to rural and regional employment.

Australia is fortunate to lay claim to some of the oldest grapevines in the world. The absence of many serious pests and diseases is to thank for this. The preservation of Australia's old vines is not only important for economic reasons, but for the unique wine brands they underpin and the premium image the industry has worked hard to craft over many years. Furthermore, these historic vineyards Australia's vineyards possess highly-sought-after genetic diversity that is of significant benefit for generating planting material. Genetic diversity offers opportunities for future clonal selection to target quality attributes or resilience to climate change.