**Update on getting produce into Australia**

 **December 2018**  

1. **Background**

The OPI[[1]](#footnote-1) programme for exports to Australia will be phased out completely by the end of 2019 and from October 2019 all consignments from New Zealand will be inspected in Australia. OPI inspectors however will be available in New Zealand from

* The beginning of January through to the end of March 2019 (Auckland and Central Otago), and,
* Again from late May/ early June through until late September 2019 (Bay of Plenty).

In early 2017 Australia announced it was developing the Compliance Based Inspection Scheme (CBIS) to facilitate enhanced entry of produce into Australia. This scheme offers reduced inspection rates and faster entry across the Australian border for importers whose consignments of a specified commodity have a high compliance rate. Detail of the scheme can be found on the following two sites:

* PMAC web site <http://www.pmac.co.nz/advice-for-exporters.html>
* DAWR web site - <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/plant-products/risk-return>

New Zealand’s Avocado industry has been operating under CBIS since October 2017. Results to date have not been encouraging. Last season no avocado importer managed to qualify for the reduced inspection rate (i.e. they did not achieve 10 consecutive clear consignments) and fumigation rates were high. This situation was at times compounded by long delays for inspections and pest not being identified to species level. At this stage, DAWR is not planning to offer CBIS to any other commodities from New Zealand.

The situation with avocados resulted in MPI visiting DAWR in May and an Industry group visit in late June 2018. The MPI / DAWR meeting resulted in an agreed task list that both organisations will progress. This task list is being progressed and MPI and DAWR communicate regularly to discuss issues.

1. **Latest news**

The latest working group meeting was held on the 13th December and has the following news to report:

* 1. MPI had two meetings with DAWR in early December. The first was a teleconference to discuss operational detail about what is happening at the border and progress on the list of agreed activities. This teleconference was followed a few days later by a three day bilateral meeting in Australia at which senior level officials from DAWR and MPI discussed the high level settings for trade between the two countries. The bilateral is an annual meeting.
	2. At the bilateral meeting Australia made it clear that regardless of the plant commodity and country they are cracking down on pathways where there is a high non-compliance rate (i.e. 10% quarantine failure) at the Australian border. Where greater than 10% of consignments are not compliant Australian officials will look for ways in which that compliance can be increased. For example after a review of all cut flower and foliage imports in 2017 starting from March 2018, DAWR required that all cut flower and foliage imports are either pre-fumigated in the country of origin with methyl bromide or produced under a systems approach.
	3. At the bilateral meeting, MPI expressed concern about the effect Australia’s border changes are having on New Zealand sectors. In particular they asked for improvements to be made to the Australian AIMS[[2]](#footnote-2) system which is not providing good support to the CBIS scheme. Officials also talked about the time taken to inspect consignments and provide identification of any insects.
	4. DAWR acknowledged it has been resource constrained with regard to inspectors and indicated the cap on inspector numbers is loosening. It will be working to ensure adequate inspector numbers during times of heightened demand. DAWR also reported it is working to upgrade parts of the AIMS system but progress is slow. Work is progressing on the Avocado pest list and it hopes to have the list to MPI in the middle of next year.
	5. DAWR has asked if New Zealand exporters will consider the use of a clean-up treatment e.g. ethyl formate prior to export to reduce the pest loading on consignments. DAWR indicated this approach has reduced the number of live quarantine pests on commodities that have used this treatment.
1. **Going forward**
	1. DAWR has agreed to send a Senior inspector and the National Entomological coordinator to New Zealand to meet with MPI and New Zealand industry between the 11th and 15th February 2019. A video conference will be held in Tauranga on the morning of Monday 11th at which they will provide an overview on sampling and inspection processes at the border in Australia. Sector representatives, Exporters and IVA’s are invited to attend. Please contact info@pmac.co.nz for full details. The two officials will be meeting with Zespri, New Zealand Avocados and Summerfruit NZ during the visit to look in detail at inspection of fruit.

* 1. Exporters are asked to provide feedback to their sector body or MPI on the fate of consignments at the Australian border. If you are involved in sending consignments to Australia which will be inspected at the border and are prepared to collect data, please contact info@pmac.co.nz for a data template. This data is important to MPI because it ensures conversations with DAWR are based on fact. It is particularly important when reporting on a consignment that the biosecurity direction number is attached. MPI is happy to follow up on issues with individual consignments. If you would like their assistance they encourage you to contact them quickly with all of the relevant details and especially the biosecurity direction number.
	2. MPI and the working group will continue to look for ways to facilitate smoother access. A communication update will be circulated whenever there is something significant to report. All communications (present and past) are [available here.](http://www.pmac.co.nz/opi-cbis-working-group.html)  If you have any specific queries or concerns on these communications, please check the websites mentioned above or email plantexports@mpi.govt.nz
1. Offshore Pre-shipment Inspection programme [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. AIMS is the Australian Customs software used to handle imports [↑](#footnote-ref-2)