**Update on getting produce into Australia**

 **July 2018**  

1. **Background**

Australia is phasing out the OPI[[1]](#footnote-1) programme which allows eligible New Zealand fruit and vegetables to be precleared in New Zealand by DAWR2 inspectors before export. It is now apparent that OPI will probably not be available beyond May 2019 and all produce will need to be cleared (inspected) at the Australian Border. An Industry group recently visited Australia and heard from DAWR their rationale for this change. DAWR’s removal of OPI is a consequence of a strategic policy decision taken at a higher level and in part appears to have arisen as a consequence of Australia’s increasingly global trading relationships.

Some commodities will be eligible for Compliance Based Inspection Scheme (CBIS) which potentially rewards importers with a good compliance history with decreased inspection rates and faster entry. CBIS details are available at:

* 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>

The Avocado industry operated under CBIS from October 2017 through to March 2018. Results were not encouraging . No exporter managed to qualify for the reduced inspection rate by achieving 10 consecutive clear consignments and fumigation rates were high. This situation was compounded by long delays for inspections, low identification rates of pests to species level and a number of other frustrations.

This situation resulted in MPI visiting DAWR in May and an Industry group visiting Australia in late June. The Industry group talked with importers, viewed their facilities and also met with the operational and policy teams within DAWR. Both initiatives have been very productive and it appears that engagement with DAWR is improving. The MPI / DAWR meeting resulted in [a communique](http://www.pmac.co.nz/uploads/1/4/1/0/14100200/meeting_mpi_dawr_opi_cbis_outcomes_may2018_final.pdf) containing an agreed task list that both organisations will progress. The MPI/ Industry working group will continue to meet regularly to facilitate information exchange with MPI and to ensure the wider industry is updated with new information.

1. **Latest news**

The latest working group meeting was held on the 27th June and has the following news to report

* 1. New Zealand will have a total of 8 OPI inspectors in New Zealand between May 2018 and April 2019 (important to note that the number in NZ at any one time will not exceed two (in January 2019) and for most of the year only one inspector will be bookable). Allocation of the inspector’s time is being made according to principles agreed by the working group. People wanting an OPI inspection should contact Lynette Winters on lynette.winters@asurequlaity.com or 021 98 6943
	2. Lynette will be working to ensure that all of the inspectors time is being used to undertake inspections. Where she needs to ration their time she will use [the prioritization principles](http://www.pmac.co.nz/uploads/1/4/1/0/14100200/prioritisation_principles_-july_2018.docx) that were agreed .
	3. Amongst other issues MPI and DAWR will begin work rationalising the quarantine pest list. MPI will be working to have non-actionable pests removed and where possible ask for the removal of entire families ( as opposed to individual named species within a family) where New Zealand has no pests in that family
	4. DAWR has committed to document Australia’s import processes and procedures (over the July-August 2018 period). How the system works , what the export Industry needs to be aware of when non-compliance is detected , and what options are available at all stages in the process. Once this document has been received it will be available to all those exporting to Australia. It is suggested that exporters study this closely and ask their brokers/ importers to keep them appropriately informed at key points in the process. Brokers have not always been efficient at informing exporters about the pest status of their consignments and their options at each stage.
	5. Later in the year DAWR will visit New Zealand to undertake a joint review of MAO operations to gain a greater appreciation of the systems in place in New Zealand.
1. **Ongoing working group advice**
	1. Growers, packhouses and exporters should continue to do all they can to ensure that only compliant product is sent to Australia. In the case of CBIS, even the presence of non-quarantine pests may result in a “fail” as an intervention is required to identify the pest and determine its status. (Note that for avocados under CBIS this accounted for a large part of the failures). Australian officials assume that insect finds at the border are a pest until shown otherwise, as occurs in New Zealand. As a consequence the presence of insects will delay passage across the border.

* 1. Exporters are asked to provide feedback to their sector body or MPI on the fate of consignments at the Australian border. Several organisations are already collecting data. 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 (detailing the key on-arrival data components).
	2. DAWR decides whether a product can qualify for CBIS or not. If your commodity is not yet being sent via CBIS – look now to see whether there are enhancements required to reduce insect presence in the consignment. Where this involves significant change to the production chain please inform MPI so they can inform DAWR officials. This will inform the product settings under CBIS.

**Next steps**

Going forward the working group (Industry and MPI) will be meeting monthly to monitor access into Australia.

 A communication update will be circulated whenever there is something significant to report. All communications ( present and past ) will be [available here](http://www.pmac.co.nz/advice-for-exporters.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)