**Update on getting produce into Australia**

 **April 2018**  

1. **Background**

Australia is phasing out the OPI[[1]](#footnote-1) programme where eligible New Zealand fruit and vegetables can be precleared in New Zealand. This will mean that by May 2020 all consignments previously exported under OPI will need to be inspected in Australia. Australia is looking at a Compliance Based Inspection Scheme (CBIS) as one way of facilitating entry.

MPI and Industry members on PMAC are concerned about the potential impact of these changes. As a consequence a working group has been formed to smooth the transition away from OPI. For more background and CBIS details see <http://www.pmac.co.nz/advice-for-exporters.html>

1. **Latest news**

**Inspector timetable for 2018/19**

MPI has released the OPI inspector timetable for 2018/19. Every effort has been made to make the most of the time inspectors are present in New Zealand. The full timetable is available from <http://www.pmac.co.nz/advice-for-exporters.html> . It should be noted there will be no inspectors in New Zealand from mid-September 2018 to early New Year 2019. When inspectors are available keep in touch with Lynette Winters ([Lynette.Winters@asurequality.com](mailto:Lynette.Winters@asurequality.com)) so that you have every opportunity to use any unallocated inspection time.

***Media attention***

In the last week of March two articles appeared on international web sites expressing Australian importers frustration with the move away from OPI. See:

* <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/191827/Australian-Government-delays-imports>
* <http://www.fruitnet.com/asiafruit/article/175139/australian-import-industry-squeezed>

These articles identified two prime concerns:

1. Delays at the Australian border meaning consignments may take 7 or 8 days to be cleared greatly increasing costs to importers and resulting in a serious decline in fruit quality.
2. High consignment failure rates due to the difficulty of accurately identifying often globally distributed organisms (and their eggs), down to a taxonomic level to confirm they are not of quarantine concern.

At working group meetings held just before and then again just after the media releases MPI and Industry members on the working group agreed :

* MPI will send a letter to DAWR Senior officials outlining New Zealand’s concerns and asking for a face to face meeting within the next month to discuss the issues and work towards a solution.
* MPI will offer DAWR assistance if resourcing and /or expertise are limiting factors.
* MPI will inform both MFAT and the Minister of industry’s concerns.
* MPI will ask that in the longer term DAWR revises its list of pests of concern to remove cosmopolitan pest that are not of quarantine concern.
* Industry will ask all New Zealand Exporters and significant Australian Importers to collect information of activity at the border- delays, consignments held up, proportion of consignments cleared without unnecessary delays etc. MPI indicated that it is most important it has real data and examples so that in future discussions with DAWR it can talk with confidence about the facts. Please provide any information to your sector body.
* Industry is asked to ensure that their production and packing processes are up to scratch so clean produce is sent. Where there are concerns soft treatments such as Vapormate could be considered prior to export to kill any remaining pests.
* MPI suggested that each lot presented under a single DOI for OPI inspection is exported to Australia under one phytosanitary certificate rather than being split off under several phytosanitary certificates to different ports. DAWR have advised that this may be one of contributing factors to the difference between OPI and on-arrival failure rates in Australia.

The working groups next meeting will be held in May to discuss progress and agree next steps.

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 will result in a “fail” as an intervention is required to identify the pest and determine its status. Australian officials assume that insect finds at the border are a pest until identification shows otherwise, as occurs in New Zealand, and 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 (as above) . Note Australian importers[[2]](#footnote-2) are being provided with a monthly report on the fate of their consignments. If you are not receiving any feedback from your importers on how individual consignments have fared please contact them and ask for this information.
  2. 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.

If you have any specific queries or concerns on these communications, please check the websites mentioned above or email [plantexports@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:plantexports@mpi.govt.nz)

1. Offshore Pre-shipment Inspection programme [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An importer is defined as that organisation which is the responsible party for the consignment when it is presented at the border. More detail on the definition of an importer is being sought from DAWR. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)