**Update on getting produce into Australia**

 **March 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. At this stage consignments will either be subject to 100% inspection or eligible commodities (only avocados at this point) may be able to use the Compliance Based Inspection Scheme (CBIS) Under CBIS inspections for 2018, importers (of NZ avocados) with a good compliance history will be rewarded with decreased inspection rates and faster entry. Australia will expect high compliance rate before decreased inspection rates are triggered. CBIS details are available on the:

* 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>

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. It will also look for other initiatives that could be undertaken in the medium to longer term to optimise entry to Australia.

1. **Latest news**

At the last latest working group meeting on the 13th March the allocation of OPI inspectors between May 2018 and April 2019 was discussed. Inspector numbers will reduce from the current 17 to 8. As a consequence tough decisions will need to be made and it is unlikely that everyone’s requirements will be met.

The meeting agreed seven key principles that will be used to allocate inspectors so that their use is optimised and allocations are made in a transparent, fair and equitable manner. These principles (in order of priority) are :

* Products eligible for CBIS to utilise CBIS to the fullest extent possible.
* High priority for access to OPI for those products where treatments in Australia are not a viable option.
* Products that require mandatory fumigation are not eligible for OPI.
* Only schedule inspections during the peak seasons and not during shoulder seasons.
* Product for OPI to only be presented in “windows” of the inspector’s schedule where product is able to tolerate longer periods of cool storage.
* Restrict the travel distance/time for inspectors.
* Consolidation of product at centralised inspection locations.

MPI then met with DAWR on Friday 16rd March and confirmed the following

* Avocado will only be eligible CBIS from May 2018 (i.e. no OPI inspections for avocado)
* No other commodities will be eligible for CBIS in 2018
* Inspectors will be available to undertake inspections in New Zealand for a total of 48 weeks. DAWR have restricted each of the 8 inspectors to a maximum of 6-weeks. In the period from 16 January 2019 – 28 February 2019 it is anticipated there will be 2 inspectors (one in North Island & 1 in South Island) present. At all other times of the year there will only be 1 inspector operating. There will be a period of 4 weeks in November when no inspectors will be present.

The next meeting will be held in late- March to discuss the timing for inspectors and to consider the latest advice from Australia.

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 shown 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. Any details about consignments (such as time to inspect, time for pest ID to be confirmed, storage of consignments awaiting inspection) will be used to inform MPI’s discussion with Australian officials. Having conversations based on fact rather than perception maximises the chance that these conversations will result in useful initiatives. 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 you are exporting fresh produce other than avocados, it will be inspected on arrival – so 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.

**Next steps**

Over the next 6 months the working group (Industry and MPI) will be meeting monthly to monitor access into Australia. After each meeting an update will be circulated. The December communication titled “Sending product to Australia is likely to become more difficult over the next few years” is [available here](http://www.pmac.co.nz/uploads/1/4/1/0/14100200/december_2017_opi-_cbis_communication.pdf). 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)

**Field trip**

A fact finding field trip is planned to coincide with the Hort connections conference in Brisbane on the 18th June. It will look at Australian expectations and how inspections are undertaken. Numbers will be limited . If you are interested in joining the trip please contact [info@pmac.co.nz](mailto:info@pmac.co.nz) for an itinerary .

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)