



# **Submission**

## **Draft State Biosecurity Strategy**

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**Prepared by WAFarmers Federation**

**Kim Haywood, Maddison McNeil, and Stephanie Tarlington**

**Tel:** (08) 9486 2100 **Email:** [reception@wafarmers.org.au](mailto:reception@wafarmers.org.au) **Website:** [www.wafarmers.org.au](http://www.wafarmers.org.au)

**The Western Australian Farmers Federation** 125 James Street GUILDFORD WA 6055 | PO Box 68  
GUILDFORD WA 6935



## **WAFarmers Submission: Draft State Biosecurity Strategy**

### **Introduction:**

WAFarmers Federation welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft State Biosecurity Strategy. Effective management of emerging and ongoing biosecurity threats is critical to safe guarding the future of the WA agricultural industry. Biosecurity is the protection of the economy, environment and community from negative impacts associated with pests, diseases and weeds.

The WA Biosecurity Strategy should be based on the principle of shared responsibility and should aim to increase awareness about biosecurity issues and provide a framework for biosecurity management in WA. The strategy should also aim to highlight why biosecurity is important for WA and should identify key goals and a number of outcomes and strategies for implementation to manage risks effectively.

The WA Biosecurity Strategy should address not only primary industries, but the broader biosecurity spectrum in terms of biodiversity and the natural environment, infrastructure and service industries as well as lifestyle, recreation, sport and social amenity. It should also outline how the WA government will partner with other levels of government, industry and the community to identify and manage biosecurity risks.

A new Biosecurity Strategy should bring about improvements to the existing biosecurity system to achieve more profitable and sustainable primary industries, including trade relationships to maintain healthy environments, both terrestrial and aquatic and to achieve social and economic outcomes for government and the broader community.

## **WAFarmers Comments for inclusion:**

The industry is willing to take a strong leadership role in biosecurity risk management by:

- identifying, reporting and managing biosecurity risks that may threaten their or other businesses
- complying with regulations, especially in relation to record-keeping and reporting biosecurity incidents
- being vigilant by keeping a watchful eye out for unfamiliar pests, diseases and weeds
- participating in decisions making and responses to biosecurity incursions
- educating members about their roles and obligations
- working with governments and other stakeholders to develop and implement policies and strategies that will protect WA's biosecurity status and agreements relating to biosecurity responses and their funding
- funding or co-funding educational programs to develop or improve biosecurity skills
- funding or co-funding research programs in priority biosecurity areas.

Australia's geographic isolation has helped protect us from external threats. However we are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the entry of pests, diseases and weeds. Some key factors influencing increasing biosecurity risks are globalisation of trade, population growth and movements, climate variability, and imports of animal and plant materials.

WAFarmers commends and supports the proposed Outcomes and Principles as stated in the Draft WA State Biosecurity Strategy November 2014.

We would like to offer the following comments for consideration.

WAFarmers commend and endorse the continuation of the Biosecurity Senior Officers Group and would suggest the appointment of a Bee Liaison Officer to be incorporated within this Group. Commercial bee populations are critical components to primary businesses and WAFarmers is concerned that at present there is not a recognised government representative appointed to assist the bee sector with its biosecurity roles and obligations.

WAFarmers suggests the WA Biosecurity Council must include appropriate industry representatives that are best placed to assist the strategic decision making process in terms of industry best practice and functionality.

A critical component to the Biosecurity Strategy is a robust communication plan particularly under cost and responsibility sharing arrangements. When industry, community, and government representatives engage together in strong partnerships, this collaborative and cohesive approach generally results in positive and clear actions and outcomes.

We would emphasise the importance of maintaining and enhancing the funding and resources needed to support the ongoing development and implementation of the draft

biosecurity strategy. WAFarmers is concerned that potential funding cuts in this area will significantly jeopardise WA's competitiveness and profitability long term.

WAFarmers encourages adequate funding must be channelled into areas such as surveillance and diagnostics, as referenced in 'Principle Three', including the continued need to train lab staff in the adoption and use of up-to date lab methodologies and new state-of-the-art technologies.

WAFarmers is also very concerned that across the board funding cuts will and/are impacting the effective delivery of the Department's Extension Services to industry and this issue must be addressed within the new strategy.

As you will be aware the export market is critical to the survival of the agricultural industry in Western Australia. Having properly resourced biosecurity measures that underpin access to a range of markets must be a high priority within the Biosecurity Strategy as referenced in Principle 3 – Outcome 3.2; and Principle 4 – Outcomes 4.1 to 4.

WAFarmers strongly supports the recommendations stated in Principle 5 and outcomes 5.1 to 5.2.

We note the collaborative approach adopted to recognise R&D gaps and priorities, but we would like more information about how the gaps, priority and strategies have been identified. In other words, where can this information be accessed and how do we participate in this process?

Furthermore, how was the priority list for pests and diseases established and will it be based on the likelihood of invasion as well as potential economic impacts. A succinct list of threats, risk and economic consequences will then help to determine the best control, prevention or eradication strategies and timelines around implementation of these priorities.

## **In Summary:**

Primary industries benefit from effective biosecurity management through increased productivity, higher quality products and greater market access for their product or service by demonstrating freedom from disease. By projecting a healthy and sustainable image of WA's terrestrial and aquatic environments, the tourism and recreation industries can likewise reap the benefits of sound biosecurity management and attract increased numbers of tourists and consumers choosing to enjoy their holidays and recreation here.

Industry associations like WAFarmers Federation, and other professional bodies, play an important role in achieving these outcomes. They also lead industry participation in the development and implementation of industry standards, guidelines and codes of practice, and represent their members in negotiations with the Commonwealth and State governments regarding biosecurity response agreements and cost-sharing arrangements.

WAFarmers welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Biosecurity Strategy and welcomes further involvement as the strategy is developed.