

“Popeye” plan protects Australia’s olive oil

For immediate release: Tuesday 27 October 2009

Australia’s rapidly expanding olive industry has strengthened its protection against exotic plant pests and diseases with the launch of the new Olive Industry Biosecurity Plan at the Australian Olive Expo in Canberra today.

“This Plan is a vital tool for Australia in the fight against the pests that are an ever-present threat to the sustainability, profitability and viability of our olive industry. Action on biosecurity will help protect the 55,000 tonnes of fresh olives that are harvested in Australia annually,” said Paul Miller, President of the Australian Olive Association.

The Olive Industry Biosecurity Plan was developed by Plant Health Australia (PHA) in partnership with the Australian Olive Association, the Australian Government and state governments. The Plan includes the latest scientific research and pest intelligence to identify the highest risk pests to the industry, such as Verticillium wilt or the Olive fly (see below).

“These pests pose a real threat to our growing industry. A pest incursion would not only impact our production capacity, but would also put at risk our annual \$20 million export market. By partnering with the Australian government, state governments and Plant Health Australia, we now have this Plan which helps us reduce the threat and be better prepared to spot and manage an incursion. It is about being proactive, and is a real sign of our industry’s maturity,” said Mr Miller.

PHA Executive Director and CEO, Greg Fraser, said “PHA has applied its biosecurity acumen and technical expertise to develop this Plan. The Australian Olive Association has signed the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, which guarantees it a say in decisions about managing and funding plant pest incursions in the olive industry. This Plan underpins that by prioritising the olive industry’s highest risk exotic pests and identifying actions to reduce the likelihood or impact of any incursion.”

Mr Fraser underlined the importance of following up these achievements, stating, “The results, while commendable, will not deliver substantial benefits without the Plan being implemented.”

The significance of exotic pest incursions on Australia’s rural sector should not be underestimated. An outbreak of the Asian papaya fruit fly near Cairns in 1995 resulted in trade restrictions of more than \$400 million and cost \$34 million to eradicate. The more recent Citrus canker incursion in Emerald (Qld) cost \$18.1m just to eradicate. The broader costs to citrus growers, the Emerald community and the Australian citrus industry are yet to be fully determined.

Further research has also highlighted the emotional impact that biosecurity emergencies have on individuals and communities.

PHA works with many agricultural industries to help develop and implement Industry Biosecurity Plans through surveillance strategies, diagnostics protocols, contingency plans and training.

PHA is also helping growers secure their farms and their futures against potentially devastating plant pests and diseases. Partnering with Animal Health Australia, PHA



Plant Health
AUSTRALIA

has develop a website with biosecurity planning information for both plant and livestock producers at www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

More information about the 21 Industry Biosecurity Plans currently in place is available on the PHA website at www.planthealthaustralia.com.au.

- ENDS -

For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact:
Jim McGrath, 0407 067 305



Olive fly (courtesy www.padil.gov.au)

NewsReleaseNewsRelease

Plant Health Australia Ltd

Phone: (02) 6215 7700

Fax: (02) 6260 4321

www.planthealthaustralia.com.au

Achieving Outcomes Through Partnerships...