

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12 October 2023

[REDACTED] Response to Biosecurity Protection Levy

General Comment

[REDACTED] is the representative body for [REDACTED] that primarily focuses on setting and providing guidance on the management of the [REDACTED] levy. [REDACTED] sector produces approximately 1 million tonnes of [REDACTED] annually representing 73% of [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] serve as both agricultural levy collection agents for growers supplying to [REDACTED] and as collectors of the [REDACTED] levy.

The [REDACTED] expresses deep disappointment in the approach taken by the Federal Government to address the national biosecurity funding shortfall.

Making changes to agricultural levies involves extensive industry consultation and a meticulous process. The handling and allocation of these funds are subject to stringent governance requirements, ensuring transparency in investment decisions and rigorous evaluation processes to guarantee responsible use and genuine impact. In contrast, the Federal Government has imposed a new policy without engaging in any consultation or plans to provide ongoing reporting and evaluation around impact for the levy payers. This inconsistency leads to a sense of distrust and frustration.

The [REDACTED] sees biosecurity as a key investment priority for industry. The industry pays a biosecurity levy to Plant Health Australia and currently has an active EPPR levy to recoup the cost of the incursion of Tomato Potato Psyllid (TPP) in 2017. Additionally, there are ongoing levy investments for managing existing pest and disease incursions, reducing future incursion risks, and conducting surveillance for early detection. Producers also implement their own on-farm pest and disease biosecurity management programs. Given the extensive existing investments in biosecurity, with clear industry-targeted outcomes, there appears to be no need for the proposed Biosecurity Protection Levy.

Requesting producers to contribute more for biosecurity may not be the ideal solution, particularly when all Australians benefit from agricultural production. We urge the Federal Government to reconsider imposing this levy and instead explore avenues for enhancing internal efficiencies or imposing appropriate levies on those entities that pose the highest risk.

Key Questions for Consultation

- There should be no levy imposed. However, if the government insists on imposing the levy, the definitions, rate, and collection methods should align with the agricultural levy.
- [REDACTED]