July 2025

# National Policy on Pest Freedom Programs and Pest Absence

# Frequently Asked Questions

***What is the purpose of the National Policy on Pest Freedom Programs and Pest Absence (the policy)?***

* There is currently no written set of national requirements that guide the implementation of a pest free area (PFA; outside of the fruit fly context), pest free place of production (PFPP), pest free production site (PFPS) or an area of pest absence (APA).
* The policy outlines an updated framework and key responsibilities of the Australian Government, state and territory governments and industry in implementing a PFA, PFPP, PFPS and APA for domestic and international trade.
* The policy incorporates updated terminology, definitions and concepts that align with the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) adopted by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Commission on Phytosanitary Measures.
* The policy outlines requirements for establishing a PFA, PFPP, PFPS, or identifying areas where pest status may be considered as ‘absent’. These requirements serve to assure importing authorities (whether domestic or international) that plant or plant products do not require additional measures or treatments to ensure pest freedom. If such assurance cannot be provided, importing authorities may impose additional import conditions, such as irradiation or cold treatment.

***Why am I being asked to provide feedback on the policy?***

* We invite you to provide feedback on the policybecause it may impact your industry or business activities.
* The Australian Government, state and territory governments and industry collectively share responsibilities that are described under Australian and international legislative frameworks. You must understand your responsibilities and general biosecurity duty as a stakeholder.
* Industry must comply with relevant government frameworks for the Australian Government and state and territory governments to authorise a PFA, PFPP, PFPS (collectively referred to as pest freedom programs, PFP) or an APA for domestic and international trade.

***How will my feedback impact the policy?***

* Your feedback will be considered and may be used to refine the policy before the policy is finalised. We can only consider feedback that aligns with our responsibilities under the [ISPMs](https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/standards-setting/ispms/) and [Inter-governmental Agreement on Biosecurity](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/nbc/intergovernmental-agreement-on-biosecurity).

***How was the policy developed and who is responsible for endorsing the policy?***

* The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) drafted the policy with input from state and territory governments.
* The department consulted and obtained approval of the current consultation draft through the [Plant Health Committee (PHC)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/plant/health/committees/phc). PHC members include the Chief Plant Health Managers (or equivalent) in each state and territory and the Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer.
* PHC is responsible for endorsing the policy.

***How will the policy be implemented?***

* The policy takes effect after PHC endorses it. Growers and industry stakeholders must follow the requirements and processes described in the policy and supporting documentation (see FAQ below) to demonstrate pest freedom and pest absence in new market access requests.
* Pest freedom and pest absence claims that are currently accepted by domestic and international trading partners only need to be reviewed if there is a change in biosecurity risk.

***How will this policy support domestic and international trade?***

* Programs that align with international standards ensure that Australia’s pest regulation and export certification are trusted and defensible. Not meeting international requirements could damage Australia’s strong biosecurity reputation and negatively impact trade outcomes.
* A national policy will improve consistency in the way PFA, PFPP, PFPS and APA are implemented.
* Maintaining pest freedom or absence that is supported by evidence allows plant products to be traded without additional phytosanitary measures.
* Australia will be breaching international standards if we certify that exported goods originate from locations where a pest is ‘free’ or ‘absent’, without evidence to support those claims.

***How do domestic and international trading partners assess and accept a PFP or APA?***

* A PFP or APA established domestically is the responsibility of state and territory governments. The implementing jurisdiction is responsible for advising other jurisdictions and seeking recognition of the PFP or APA prior to trade commencing.
* The Australian Government is responsible for authorising and negotiating the recognition of a PFP or APA by foreign countries to facilitate international trade.
* The exporting jurisdiction usually needs to provide technical information about the PFP or APA, which the importing jurisdiction or country use to support their risk assessment. The importing jurisdiction or country may request additional data. Importing countries may also request to conduct audits of a PFP or APA.
* An area freedom certificate may be issued by the exporting jurisdiction to support recognition of a PFP or APA.

***What is NOT in the policy?***

* The policy does not contain specific requirements for individual pest/host scenarios.
* The policy does not contain technical and operational details to meet domestic and international market access requirements.

***Is there supporting documentation for the policy?***

* Yes. The policy is supported by two documents - *National Guideline for Implementing Pest Freedom Programs and Areas of Pest Absence* and *Template for Implementing Pest Freedom Programs and Areas of Pest Absence.*
* These documents contain operational details that are mostly for government use. They are not open for consultation but can be shared with individual industries as they seek recognition of pest management programs. This presents an opportunity to get ongoing feedback that we can consider for future updates.

**Submit your feedback**

We welcome your feedback on the policy. Your feedback will shape our understanding of industry needs and challenges, ensuring the policy is relevant, effective and practical to implement.

We welcome feedback on the policy or issues raised by the FAQ document but particularly encourage responses on:

* How clear was the information presented in the policy on establishing a pest freedom program (PFP) or determining an area of pest absence (APA)? Are there features we haven’t captured that you believe would be useful to include in the policy?
* Do you believe the policy provides clear guidance for implementing a PFP and determining an APA?
* How relevant is the policy to your industry or interests?
* Are there any areas of concern or suggestions for improvement?
* What impact do you think the policy will have on strengthening domestic and international biosecurity and trade?
* What challenges do you foresee in implementing this policy?

**Have your say**

* We encourage stakeholders to contribute to the discussion through the Have Your Say survey which is now live.
* We also welcome respondents to provide general comments or perspectives.
* The survey closes on Monday 1 September 2025.

Join the conversation. Go to https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au

**Next steps**

The department will consider all feedback. Your responses and ideas will help identify ways to improve the policy. The department will publish a summary of the feedback from the survey after consultation closes.

Once the department has consolidated changes to the policy, it will be submitted to PHC for final endorsement. The endorsed policy will be published on the department’s website.

**Contacts**

For further information or questions about the *National Policy on* *Pest Freedom Programs and Pest Absence* email [nationalpestpolicy@aff.gov.au](mailto:nationalpestpolicy@aff.gov.au).