

24 November 2022

Biosecurity Sustainable Funding Taskforce
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
18 Marcus Clarke Street
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: secretariatbsf@agriculture.gov.au ,

To whom it may concern

Making national biosecurity funding sustainable

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper on Sustainable funding and investment to strengthen biosecurity.

The Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) is the peak industry body representing professional fishing, pearling and aquaculture enterprises, processors and exporters in Western Australia.

WAFIC works to secure a responsible and sustainable industry that is confident of resource sustainability and security of access to a fair share of the resource; cost-effective fisheries' management; those businesses can be operated in a safe, environmentally responsible, and profitable way; and that investment in industry research and development is valued and promoted.

WAFIC recognises the importance of prevention, management and control of aquatic pests and diseases to ensure sustainability of aquatic resources, which in turn enables our industry to provide food security to the WA community and broader markets.

To meet the ongoing challenges on managing biosecurity risks, WAFIC acknowledges the need to strengthen long-term sustainable funding and resourcing.

WAFIC understands that many funding options have been proposed across government, industry and community through previous engagement, consultation processes and reports. The discussion paper scopes to explore the following opportunities to:

- mature co-funding and investment strategies with key system partners (both government and industry);
- expand the delivery of biosecurity services to third parties (both within and outside of government), where it is safe and mutually beneficial to do so;
- grow our investment into systems and technologies that both improve risk management and drive efficiency into the system (for users and government), and
- remove unnecessary compliance costs from the system through changes to policy and practice that incentivise good behaviour and remove redundant requirements.

The commercial fishing industry throughout Australia is competing for fishing grounds to an array of spatial pressures such as oil and gas activities, marine protected areas, coastal developments and climate change. Unlike the terrestrial environment, fishermen don't hold property rights over their fishing grounds, and this means there is almost limitless scope for displacement. The fishing industry is already seeing its effects and can testify that the spatial squeeze from oil and gas activities has had long-term ecological, social and economic impacts to fishers' livelihood. Through these processes and emerging new industries such as renewable energy the marine environment and associated biosecurity risks can exponentially increase.

The commercial fishing industry pay an annual licence fee to either Commonwealth or State government for the right to fish, these fees are already fully allocated and are used for the management, research, compliance, biosecurity and representative bodies such as WAFIC to ensure a long-term sustainable commercial fishing industry. WAFIC therefore would strongly object to any additional levy or cost recovery models been applied to the commercial fishing industry.

In considering the potential funding options and opportunities for sustainable biosecurity funding model, a concept from environmental law on the polluter pays principle may be an option to consider and explore. This concept will ensure the party responsible for producing pollution, or in this case biosecurity issue, the responsible party is paying for the damage done to the natural environment.

Whilst this option has some limitations if the responsible party can't be identified, the concept could be modified, to include a levy to an industry such as international shipping which presents a high biosecurity risk to the marine environment. Therefore, an industry such as an international shipping company pays a higher levy compared to a domestic shipping company that only operates in Australian waters and in the event of an identified biosecurity breach, the polluter pay concept is also applied.

A concept like this would need to be supported by a series of high-level ecological risk assessment workshop for a range of high-risk industries and be underpinned by science. An annual levy is then applied to these industries and reviewed over time to adjust for improved and/or changes in biosecurity systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a high-level concept on making national biosecurity funding sustainable, WAFIC welcomes ongoing engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry regarding the information provided in this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darryl Hockey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Darryl Hockey
Chief Executive Officer