



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**

Plant Quarantine Pest and Official Control National Policy

Biosecurity Plant Division

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(7 June 2017)



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Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Postal address GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone 1800 900 090

Web **agriculture.gov.au**

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1 Introduction

The Australian Government has developed this document to provide *strategic* direction to the state and territory governments and to industry to maintain Australia's favourable biosecurity status and to support international market access.

Under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), only quarantine pests or regulated non-quarantine pests can be the subject of phytosanitary measures at the Australian border. If a pest (this policy is only applicable for plant pests and diseases) is present in Australia, it can only be classified as a quarantine pest if it is under *official control*.

A quarantine pest is "A **pest** of potential economic importance to the **area endangered** thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being **officially controlled** [ISPM 5, *Glossary of phytosanitary terms*]."

A non-quarantine pest is a pest "whose presence in **plants for planting** affects the **intended use** of those **plants** with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party [ISPM 5]."

The IPPC defines *official control* as "The active enforcement of mandatory **phytosanitary regulations** and the application of mandatory **phytosanitary procedures** with the objective of **eradication** or **containment** of **quarantine pests** or for the management of **regulated non-quarantine pests**." [ISPM 5]

1.1 Policy objectives and scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a platform for the consistent application of official control. This policy will assist the Australian Government, state and territory governments and industry to determine whether a **pest** is a **quarantine pest**, and the requirements for placing a pest under official control in accordance with the IPPC International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs).

This policy, and its supplementary documents, supports IPPC objectives to:

- clarify the concepts of quarantine pest and official control, so Australia abides by its international obligations and national legislation;
- identify those pests present in Australia that should be defined and managed as quarantine pests;
- improve understanding of government and industry roles and responsibilities for implementing and maintaining official control activities; and
- assist the Australian Government to review trading partners' application of official control for pests of concern.

This policy outlines:

- classification of quarantine pests and regulated non-quarantine pests; and
- principles of official control.

2 Classification of quarantine pests and regulated non-quarantine pests

Under the IPPC, importing countries can declare a pest as a quarantine pest or regulated non-quarantine pest, allowing the importing country to implement technically justified phytosanitary measures to protect their country from the pest of concern. If the pest is already present in Australia, it must not be widely distributed and be under official control before it can be considered as a quarantine pest or a regulated non-quarantine pest.

If a pest, within a country, is not classified as a quarantine pest or regulated non-quarantine pest, that country has no technical basis on which to implement phytosanitary measures to address the risk posed by that pest.

2.1 Plant pest status categories

ISPM 8 (*Determination of pest status in an area*) defines the different categories of pest status, and can be applied either nationally or regionally (for states and territories). There are four categories that allow a pest to be classified as a quarantine pest:

- Absent,
- Transient: actionable, under eradication,
- Present: under eradication, and
- Present: subject to official control.

All other plant pest status categories do not provide justification for declaring a pest a quarantine pest. The only exceptions are for pests that are present and uncontrolled in Australia, but these pests can vector quarantine disease/s that are not present in Australia; these pests can be controlled at the border as a *regulated article* (Any **plant, plant product**, storage place, **packaging**, conveyance, container, soil and any other organism, object or material capable of harbouring or spreading **pests**, deemed to require **phytosanitary measures**, particularly where international transportation is involved [ISPM 5]).

The Australian Government cannot use any other plant pest status category as a basis for imposing phytosanitary measures on import pathways.

3 Principles of official control in Australia

The four Australian official control principles are derived from the requirements of the ISPMs (in addition to the definition of official control in ISPM 5, the concepts of “official control” and “not widely distributed” are also further developed in the ISPM 5 Supplement 1 [*Guidelines on the interpretation and application of the concepts of “official control” and “not widely distributed”*]). Where official control programmes are implemented, they are to incorporate these four principles.

Principle 1: Official control requires mandatory activities that are technically justified and non-discriminatory.

Mandatory activities

These include active eradication or containment in the infested area (area where the pest is located), surveillance in the endangered area (area where the pest could establish) and restrictions related to the movement into and within the protected area (area where the pest is not located). Containment of the pest in the infested area can include suppression activities (destruction and disposal), but this is not mandatory.

Technical justification

The level of surveillance (general or specific) and measures to reduce the likelihood of entry, establishment and spread of the pest into protected areas (entry conditions, movement restrictions, treatments, inspections, testing requirements) must be designed based on the relevant biological characteristics of the pest. These activities should apply to all pathways (identified to be above the appropriate level of protection) that are known to distribute the pest.

Non-discriminatory

Activities must not be more stringent than requirements for imports, and there should be consistency between domestic requirements and phytosanitary import requirements. Intensity of inspections, responses to non-compliance and utilisation of tolerance levels must align with activities applied to imports.

Principle 2: Official control must be applied geographically.

Geographical basis

Official control must be applied at a geographical level (nationally or regionally) and the area of application must be defined. Non-area based management options (such as certification schemes for commodities) do not constitute as official control.

National application

National application of official control is warranted when the pest is not widely distributed; that is, the total delimited infested area is smaller than the total protected areas. The key considerations are:

- The infested state or territory must delimit the extent of the pest infestation and implement measures to contain the pest.
- All non-infested state and territories must implement activities to prove the absence of the pest and measures to prevent pest entry, establishment and spread.

If national application of official control occurs, then the pest can be classified as a national quarantine pest, and the Australian Government can regulate the pest at all international ports of entry.

Regional application

Regional application of official control (Regional official control programmes can inform the assessment of regional risk [*Biosecurity Act 2015*, Ch 1, Part 1, Clause 9] and is known within the department as ‘regional differences.’ Further details of how regional differences will be used in Pest Risk Analyses are found in the explanatory guidelines) is warranted when the pest is potentially widely distributed, but there are natural or artificially created barriers that are likely to prevent the pest spreading from the infested area into the protected area(s).

Regions that claim freedom from the pest must provide evidence to support the assertion that the pest is absent and there are natural or artificial barriers preventing spread. They must also implement measures to prevent pest entry, establishment and spread.

If regional application of official control occurs, then the pest can be classified as a regional quarantine pest, and the Australian Government can regulate the pest at international ports of entry in the states and territories where the regional quarantine pest is under official control.

Principle 3: *Official control* must be authorised, transparent and enforceable by law.

Australian Government authority and involvement

Official control programmes must be established by the appropriate state and territory governments’ legislative authority and these programmes must be formally recognised by the Australian Government. States and territory governments can consider using peak industry bodies and other appropriate third party service providers to carry out the required activities for an *official control* programme; however state and territory governments must ensure that all appropriate persons involved are legally bound to perform the actions required. States and territory governments can modify or decide to terminate an official control programme, but only the Australian Government can rescind official control status for a given programme.

Transparency

The states and territories must keep the Australian Government aware, through evidentiary documentation, of all aspects of official control programmes. It is therefore necessary to establish and maintain appropriate records and document all activities related to surveillance and measures to reduce the likelihood of entry, establishment and spread of the pest. Any changes to official control programmes must formally be reported to the Australian Government.

Enforcement

Official control programmes must include legal enforcement mechanisms that are applied consistently and that are equivalent to enforcement mechanisms used for phytosanitary import requirements.

Review

Official control is subject to review by the Australian Government when information or other intelligence suggests that a programme is not effective and/or there is no longer a benefit in maintaining official control for that pest.

Principle 4: Official control must demonstrate a quantifiable cost benefit.

State and territory governments, as imposing and management authorities for *official control* programmes, must determine whether such action is cost-beneficial for the particular pest before proceeding with implementation. The cost of official control should not exceed the cumulative benefit of maintaining or implementing measures at the Australian border and maintaining the value of market access or potential market access.

4 Conclusion

Official control is a defined term under the IPPC and comprises of a range of mandatory requirements in order to comply with international guidelines and be recognised by the Australian Government. This policy provides principles to support effective application of official control in Australia and reinforces what pests may be subject to it.

For further information on this policy and its supplementary documents, or any other plant protection policy, please visit [Official control of plant quarantine pests and diseases](#).

References

- ISPM 1 Phytosanitary principles for the protection of plants and the application of phytosanitary measures in international trade
- ISPM 5 Glossary of phytosanitary terms
- ISPM 8 Determination of pest status in an area
- ISPM 9 Guidelines for pest eradication programmes
- ISPM 11 Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests
- ISPM 16 Regulated non-quarantine pests: concept and application
- Biosecurity Act (2015) and Biosecurity Bill Explanatory Memorandum (2014)
- Biosecurity Regulation (2016) and Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis Guidelines (2016)