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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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The Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the release of the first Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand.

2. Background

The Biosecurity Minister released the Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand on 25 August this year. The Strategy has been three years in the making. The process was the responsibility of the Biosecurity Council, and included numerous public submissions, nation-wide public meetings, the engagement of officials from many government agencies, as well as representatives of local government, universities, Crown Research Institutes, non-government organisations and other special interest groups.

Our Council made submissions on the draft Strategy entitled “Guarding Pacific’s Triple Star” and had further input through the Biosecurity Managers Group.

3. Definition of Biosecurity

The definition of Biosecurity (as defined in the Strategy) is the exclusion, eradication or effective management of risks posed by pests and diseases to the economy, environment and human health.

4. Focus of the Strategy

The focus of the strategy is on pre-border, border and post border activities designed to keep new pests out of New Zealand. These are central to the Crown’s biosecurity responsibility. Beyond this, the strategy addresses the Crown’s role in maintaining and monitoring the framework for pest management under which agencies, industry, and individuals take collective actions against pests. Included with other activities aimed at managing the introduction of new and unwanted species is the management of weeds and

pest animals by central and local government agencies, industry and individual landowners.

5. MAF as the Lead Agency

Cabinet approval has been given for MAF to be the lead agency and to take responsibility for end-to-end biosecurity. That is, pre-border and border activities, surveillance, incursion responses and eradication, and the transition to pest management. The Director-General of MAF will take the lead accountability. The other biosecurity agencies (DoC, MoH & MFish) will work with MAF through a chief executives forum.

The Biosecurity Council recognises that MAF needs to develop systems capable of protecting the wider interests of biosecurity and improve its connections with the aquatic, environmental and health sectors. A number of mechanisms are proposed including a central/local government forum with the Biosecurity Council reconstituted as a ministerial advisory group.

6. Partnership with Regional Councils

The Biosecurity Council agrees that there is a need to establish ongoing and effective arrangements between central government and regional councils at a number of levels. The major issue is ensuring the formal inclusion of regional councils in the strategic decisions responding to an incursion, or managing a new invader. Clear policies and lines of accountability need to be set for this type of situation as regional councils should not have to unfairly bear the costs of breaches of the border.

7. New Zealand Biosecurity Summit

This conference was held at Te Papa, Wellington on the 3 and 4 October and heralded the release of the Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand. The forum was based on the themes ‘Expectations of the Strategy’ and ‘The Future State of Biosecurity’. The Honourable Jim Sutton, Minister for Biosecurity, spoke of central government expectations and biosecurity outcomes. There was a wide range of presenters covering topics relevant to environmental, health/social, marine, industry, Maori, regional/local government, science & research and funding issues.

Basil Chamberlain (CEO, Taranaki Regional Council) spoke on the expectations of the strategy for regional/local government. Although councils had varying expectations, he said that regional councils strongly supported the development of The Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand and that the process had provided good opportunities for engagement. Common and consistent strategy expectations include:

- a need for a clear expression of purpose for biosecurity
- a focus on generating public ownership of biosecurity objectives

- appropriate and clear definition of roles and responsibilities in biosecurity activities with structures that provide good governance, leadership and accountabilities in a consistent and seamless manner
- the development of decision-making frameworks that deliver consistent, timely and high quality information and action
- systems to promote the provision of adequate resources including funding with a particular focus on proactive, ‘front-end’ investments.

For pest management in particular, there are expectations of:

- more effective national co-ordination, strategic leadership and engagement
- a review and rationalisation of legislative instruments and development of information systems and tools
- the Crown meeting its land owner responsibilities as a neighbour to private land.

8. Communications

No special publicity from Council is planned. Council will continue to work with MAF, using the Protect NZ banner, and DoC under the Weedbuster banner, for biosecurity related publicity. Further reports on the effects to regional councils will be released as MAF work through their various phases of development.

9. Recommendation

That the report be received and the contents noted.

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