

CSIRO to lead safe trade project on biosecurity challenges in Australia

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CSIRO will lead four-year safe trade project, thanks to funding from Hort Innovation, on pest and disease management measures for inter-state trade. It will develop a toolkit to improve decision making on biosecurity risk, working closely with Australia’s domestic biosecurity regulators across all states and territories.

While Australian produce is renowned for having stringent biosecurity practices along all stages of the production and supply chains, State and Territories have differing phytosanitary, or pest and disease management, requirements for inter-state trade.

Australia’s reputation for delivering high-quality produce is set to get even better following a \$9.5 million injection into pest and disease risk management measures for safe trade.

This investment, being delivered through Hort Innovation in partnership with all Australian States and Territory Governments and led by CSIRO, Australia’s national science agency, will work closely with Australia’s domestic biosecurity regulators to strengthen our science-backed approach to managing phytosanitary risks, making it easier for growers to conduct safe cross-border trade.

Hort Innovation Chief Executive Officer Brett Fifield said the program would also facilitate international market access by demonstrating to our trading partners Australia's commitment to, and confidence in our biosecurity system. "Domestic and international trade is essential to the horticulture industry," Fifield said.

"By working with some of the country's top scientists, the process for reaching market access agreements will be made easier. Improved risk science tools can support biosecurity measures that may be more cost effective and less time prohibitive for growers without compromising our already great reputation for delivering quality, safe produce," he said.

CSIRO project lead Dr Rieks van Klinken said strong scientific tools will help Australia's horticulture sector by underpinning new and existing market access opportunities and supporting our robust biosecurity system. This work contributes to the CSIRO Trusted Agrifood Exports mission's goal to improve market access for Australian growers.

"Our researchers are improving the tools available to industry to streamline phytosanitary risk management by demonstrating and quantifying the contribution of commercial supply chain and production practices to risk reduction," Dr van Klinken said.

"The tools will make it easier for biosecurity regulators to incorporate commercial practices into biosecurity system processes and ultimately will enable industry to deliver high-quality, low pest-risk consignments into treatment facilities or directly into domestic and international markets," he said.

Australian Fresh Produce Alliance Chief Executive Officer Claire McClelland said that trade and market access are a key priority for the horticulture sector.

"Improving pest management and developing risk-based approaches will support domestic and international trade, which is essential for the future growth of the sector. Harmonised interstate trade regulations will improve the commercial operating environment for all fresh produce growers and suppliers," Ms McClelland said.

Apple and Pear Australia Limited Chief Executive Officer Phil Turnbull said that this program would enable industry to better understand and measure the impacts of in-field pest management and packhouse practices to manage phytosanitary risks in apple exports.

The project is supported by CSIRO, Federal and all State Governments with additional funding contributions from CSIRO, the apple and pear levy, Apple and Pear Australia Limited, and Fruit Growers Tasmania. This project is being delivered through Hort Innovation's Hort Frontiers strategic partnership initiative. Hort Frontiers facilitates collaborative, transformation research and development to support horticulture to 2030, and beyond.