



Media Release

18 February 2019

Increased vigilance required to secure plant biosecurity at border

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is calling for increased monitoring of plant biosecurity at our borders and penalties for breaches to drive positive industry change.

“The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources recently published a draft report noting significant pest incursions on cut flowers and foliage entering Australia. This poses a significant threat to Australia’s plant industries,” said Ms Emma Germano, VFF Horticulture President.

“While incursions may have been found on cut flowers, the biosecurity impact could be widespread for all plant-based agriculture.

“Australia’s cut flower industry is valued at more than \$370 million a year with a high proportion of growers in Victoria. In March 2018, the Department introduced new import protocols to address biosecurity risks and we await further details on the impact and effectiveness of these.

“We strongly encourage the Department to engage across all sectors to drive best practice biosecurity in all industries. We have been disappointed not to be engaged in consultation with the Department via the relevant working group charged with establishing new import protocols for cut flowers and foliage.

“It is also critical for all operators within the flower industry to recognise the importance of biosecurity and for the industry to lead positive change.

“Imports are an integral part of our industry, but should not be at the expense of our national biosecurity and flower industry,” said Ms Germano.

“News of incursions is concerning as pests are a major threat to Australia’s plant industries, such as the Russian Wheat Aphid which has impacted the grains sector,” said Mr Ross Johns, VFF Grains President.

“Russian Wheat Aphid has caused widespread damage costing broad acre cropping farmers significantly over recent years and it could have been avoided through greater monitoring.

“Agricultural trade between countries is essential to our economy but it should not come at the expense of local growers by compromising our strong biosecurity measures,” said Mr Johns.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources published a *Draft Pest Risk Analysis for Cut Flower and Foliage Imports* in November 2018 and is currently seeking submissions until 15 March.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.