

4.5 Strengthening developing country quarantine through technical and policy interventions

Background

Quarantine is becoming increasingly important for developing countries, for two reasons: national biosecurity, and facilitation of trade.

Biosecurity: Countries are becoming ever more worried about incursions of new pests, weeds and diseases, as trade increases and tourists and other travellers move in rising numbers across national borders. Biosecurity involves keeping exotic pests out, and preventing those that are already in from spreading. Agriculture and the environment are both threatened, and crop yields, employment and wealth are diminished when new problems arrive. Since incursions can cost millions of dollars to manage, investment in quarantine to prevent outbreaks in the first place can be highly cost effective. The environment is also at risk from weeds smothering native vegetation, from introduced pests feeding on native plants, and from increased use of chemical pesticides that are often the only initial solution to new outbreaks.

Facilitation of trade: Many developing countries are looking to increase rural incomes through expanded production of cash crops, especially for export markets. World Trade Organisation agreements, particularly the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) agreement, require countries to provide quarantine-related information to enable importing countries to conduct risk analyses. SPS requires that these analyses be scientifically valid, and many developing countries are finding that they do not

have the knowledge of their pests, an understanding of risk analysis, or the technical infrastructure to be able to overcome these deficiencies. They must increase their capacity and knowledge.

Key strategies

Accessing distant markets for produce requires more sophisticated technologies than those required for local marketing. In some cases, additional regulatory requirements need to be fulfilled in order to prevent the spread of pests or pathogens from one region to another. SPS requirements for market access will include pest risk analyses for individual products from the exporting region and the target market, and the determination and implementation of the control measures needed to satisfy agreed regulatory requirements and risk minimisation strategies for prohibited pests. In some cases, processing of produce can reduce or eliminate sanitary and phytosanitary risks, add value and permit access to specialist markets.

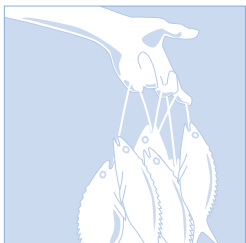
Quarantine-related research usually has strong mutual benefits, as Australia has many quarantine threats, and has a strong, professional quarantine service experienced in risk analyses and quarantine operations. Some bilateral and regional agreements for cooperation in this field already exist, and these can be built upon. Priority regions for ACIAR include Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific, to build on regional quarantine efforts and enhance regional biosecurity.





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Linking Farmers to Markets



Implementing the strategies

ACIAR will support the development of postharvest systems to comply with regulatory, quarantine or niche-market requirements, with emphasis on third-market access, using technologies that minimise reliance on chemical treatments. We will also support the development of first-stage processing technologies and systems that eliminate or reduce sanitary or phytosanitary risks and add value. The following areas for research cooperation should achieve significant impact:

- information on pest, disease and weed problems of countries—which species occur where and affect which crops, and how to minimise their numbers and damage;
- improved diagnostic and taxonomic ability, including encouragement of BIONET and other networks for regional cooperation in diagnosis, and support for national

reference collections of organisms of quarantine significance;

- innovative databases and other information retrieval systems, for better access to and processing of records and data;
- assistance with access to specialist information and literature;
- information on the life systems of particular target species, and how to control or manage them;
- assistance with development of national quarantine policies, risk-analysis protocols, incursion monitoring systems and management plans, and national plant and animal health strategies;
- collaborative research on disinfestation technologies; and
- studies of the impact of sanitary and phytosanitary regulations on developing country trade, and how to minimise negative effects.



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