

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 648

Asked on 15 June 2004

MR HORAN asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (Mr Palaszczuk)—

QUESTION:

- (1) Is he aware of the risk of Fireblight to the plants and gardens in the Garden City of Toowoomba?
- (2) Did his department have representation on the Import Risk Assessment Panel of Bio Security Australia which assessed the importation risks of New Zealand apples and pears?
- (3) Will his departmental officers make Bio Security Australia aware of this additional risk and pathway of Fireblight such as the roses and gardens of Toowoomba?

ANSWER:

- (1) I am advised that fireblight has a very wide potential host range, including cotoneaster, loquat and roses. Therefore, it is not just the gardens of Toowoomba which may be at potential risk from fireblight. However, this disease requires certain timing and environmental conditions in order to infect plants, so it does not necessarily follow that all potential host plants across Queensland are at risk.
- (2) No Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) staff were members of the Biosecurity Australia Import Risk Analysis (IRA) Panel on the import of New Zealand apples, nor of its technical working groups. Positions on these were filled by interstate scientific experts and by individuals drawn from the Australian commercial apple industry. DPI&F has prepared a science-based formal response to the draft apple IRA. The DPI&F has also prepared a socio-economic impact statement.
- (3) As indicated in the draft apple IRA report issued by Biosecurity Australia on 20 February 2004, the potential for plants other than commercial apples and pears to become infected with fireblight has been taken into account in determining the total risk of establishment of fireblight in Australia. To ensure that this issue is fully recognised, DPI&F's IRA response has highlighted issues associated with the potential for amenity and wild plants to become infected with fireblight.

In addition, I have approved a senior DPI&F officer to attend the 10th International Workshop on Fireblight Disease of Apples and Pears at Bologna, Italy on 5 July to 9 July.