

Question on Notice

No. 248

Asked on 28 February

MR M HEALY ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise the progress being made to manage Panama Disease Tropical Race 4 in North Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

It has been four years since Panama disease tropical race 4 (Panama TR4) was first detected on a commercial banana farm in Far North Queensland.

Biosecurity Queensland's containment response so far has been a success with only three farms found to be infested with Panama TR4 in the past four years, all within close proximity to each other.

Biosecurity Queensland continues to work with the owners of the two operating farms to meet their on-going biosecurity obligations and to reduce the risk of the disease spreading with minimum disruption to their business operations.

The success of this program is largely due to the combined efforts of industry, government, research bodies and the community all working together and includes industry's purchase of the first infested farm. The subsequent shutdown of all operations on that property has contributed to the containment of TR4.

To ensure that we continue to build on this success, an independent review of the Panama TR4 Program was undertaken by ACIL Allen Consulting to make recommendations for a fair and realistic model for the future management of Panama TR4.

The review recommended establishing a formal collaborative agreement between the Queensland Government and the Australian Banana Growers' Council to help deliver long-term resilience and stability in this sector.

I am pleased to advise that the Queensland Government has now committed additional funding of \$12.089 million for the Panama TR4 Program to continue until 2022-23.

In an innovative approach to progress cooperative management arrangements, a working group involving the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Australian Banana Growers' Council has been formed to develop the agreement to ensure the continued delivery of the Panama TR4 Program in Queensland.

The agreement will move towards a 50:50 shared funding arrangement over the next three to five years to follow on from over \$29 million invested in the program by the Palaszczuk Government to date.

This type of agreement will be the first of its kind for Biosecurity Queensland and the industry and is a natural progression to formalise this collaborative working relationship.

Queensland faces more biosecurity threats than any other state. The Panama TR4 program is a great example of what can be achieved when everyone plays their part – with government, industry and the community working together, we are successfully meeting this challenge.