

Question on Notice

No. 181

Asked on 10 March 2021

MR C BOYCE ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the march of the fall armyworm throughout Queensland since January 2020 and the 12 month delay for action regarding this destructive pest that has the potential to decimate the agricultural industry— Will the Minister advise what measures have been put in place to combat this biosecurity threat?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

This pest has spread across the globe in just four years. There has been no delay in action taken in regard to this pest.

Queensland has played, and continues to play, a key role in response to fall armyworm.

Significant effort has been made by producers, horticulture and grains industry leaders and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to develop management strategies for this highly mobile insect.

DAF's most experienced horticulture and broadacre entomologists are implementing a comprehensive and methodical program of research, development and extension, in collaboration with industry, to develop solutions. The program has received funding support of \$1.867 million from the Palaszczuk Government for the 2020-21 to 2022-23 financial years, which has allowed the following outcomes to be achieved to date:

- In partnership with AgBiTech, an Australian company specialising in biological control of pests, DAF has been granted approval by the Australian regulators to import the product Fawligen®. This product contains a virus that specifically targets FAW larvae. Research has recently commenced to assess the performance of this product under Australian conditions. This is a national first.
- DAF has established an extensive surveillance trapping network with 70 strategically placed traps to monitor both the landscape and seasonal movement patterns of the pest. This network led to the discovery of FAW in 21 new regions across Queensland.
- Resistance testing of Queensland's FAW population has established a baseline for conventional chemistry in terms of pesticide resistance. This will ensure growers and agribusinesses are well informed on which pesticides are likely to provide some control under field conditions. This information will reduce the potential for increased genetic selection of resistant insects through incorrect pesticide choice.
- DAF has identified several egg and larval parasitoids, predatory insects and fungal pathogens that are active on FAW. In particular, the department has discovered the

presence of a Braconid wasp, which has caused 40 per cent larval death in a field at Ayr. The role of natural enemies or beneficial insects is important, and these will form a significant part of our ongoing management strategy.