

Question on Notice

No. 897

Asked on 20 August 2024

MR S ANDREW asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise (a) where copies of Biosecurity Queensland's documented organic system plan for managing treated areas and any impacts to certification status may be obtained by landholders, (b) why the 'withholding' period for farm produce being certified as organic, following treatment by s-methoprene, has been reduced from 12 months to 3 weeks and (c) what scientific studies and/or environmental impact studies the department has obtained, to support such a reduction?

ANSWER:

The National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce (the National Standard) is Australia's technical export standard for organic and bio-dynamic goods. The National Standard is administered by the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Any question pertaining to decisions taken by National Standard Advisory Committee need to be directed to the Honourable Julie Collins MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Small Business, within whose portfolio DAFF resides.

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program (the Program) does not develop systems plans for organic producers. The National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce sets the requirements for organic producers.

The withholding period (WHP) required for chemicals, including those used by the Program, is determined by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). The APVMA is the independent authority responsible for assessing and issuing approved instructions via labels and permits for the use of agricultural chemicals under the Commonwealth's *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994*.

The National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce and the APVMA have different withholding periods because of differences in assessment criteria.

The Program advises that APVMA permits for the fire ant treatment product that includes the active ingredient s-methoprene has the following withholding period requirements: *not required when used as directed*. The APVMA maximum residue limit (MRL) standard indicates MRLs are not required to be set, indicating that residues in food commodities are not associated with the use of the fire ant treatment subject to the crop washing requirements. This means that residues will not be present in the commodities from treated crops at zero days after the treatment subject to the crop washing requirements.