



Submission to the Australian Farm Institute paper
commissioned by the PBCRC titled:

***A Sustainable Research and Development
and Extension System
to Support National Plant Health***

May 2016

Introduction

WFA and WGGA are grateful for the opportunity to provide input into the Australian Farm Institute paper commissioned by the PBCRC titled: *A Sustainable Research and Development and Extension System to Support National Plant Health*, and have decided to lodge a joint submission. This reflects the shared interest in and commitment to collaboration in this field by WFA and WGGA. This is a joint submission by the two peak bodies.

About Winemakers Federation of Australia and Wine Grape Growers Australia

The **Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA)** is the national peak body for Australia's winemakers. Our objective is to represent the interests of Australian winemakers and grape growers of all sizes on national and international issues affecting the Australian Wine Sector, through a single organization. Government recognition of WFA as a representative organisation is on the basis WFA represents the entire Australian winemaking sector, including members and non-members. WFA is recognised as a representative organisation under the *Australian Grape and Wine Authority (AGWA) Corporation Act*. WFA is incorporated under the *SA Associations Incorporation Act 1985*.

WFA membership represents around 80% of the national wine grape crush and has over 370 wineries as members. WFA represents small, medium and large winemakers from across the country's wine-making regions, with each having a voice at the Board level. WFA Board decisions require 80% support so no one sector can dominate the decision-making process. In practice, most decisions are determined by consensus. WFA works in partnership with the Australian Government and our sister organisation, Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGA), to develop and implement policy that is in the wine sector's best interests.

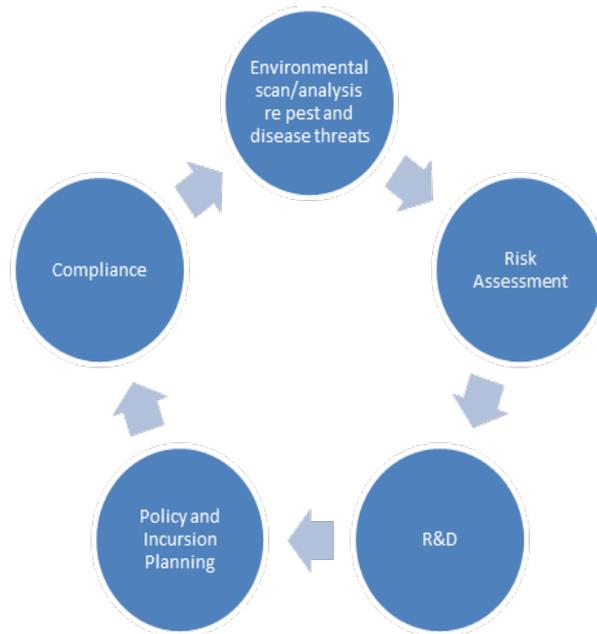
Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGA) an incorporated association that is the national voice for Australian wine grape growers. Representation is via an executive committee, and funding is contributed via a mix of voluntary contributions, direct and affiliate membership, and project funding from individual members and representative grower bodies.

There are over 6,000 wine grape growers in Australia who are represented by WGGA, and the core areas of responsibility include facilitating biosecurity of the national viticulture industry, advocacy of grower and wine industry issues, ensuring that commercial practices are fair and reasonable, and contributing to national RD&E policy as it impacts on winegrowers. WGGA, as the signatory to the Emergency Pest and Plant Response Deed, assumes responsibility for facilitating biosecurity arrangements on behalf of the wine industry.

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General comments

- While recognizing the efficiencies in completing submissions via the .pdf templates supplied, completing a submission in this format is restrictive and we have chosen to supply our comments in this format instead.
- WFA/WGGA agree that “doing nothing” is not a realistic option. This is an area of great importance, and with increased movement of goods and people in an increasingly global market, the risk of biosecurity outbreaks continues to escalate. There is evidence that biosecurity incursions can enter the country via natural pathways, such as air currents, from adjacent nations, and as such the threat is continuous and real.
- There is a critical need to build understanding of biosecurity issues across primary industries, and to maintain capacity to respond to incursions and outbreaks.
- Australia as an island nation has a unique advantage. The ability to produce “clean, green” food and wine is essential given that our relatively high labour costs preclude us from being competitive only on price.
- There is growing interest in low-input production systems to satisfy a growing market, in particular for “organic” and “biodynamic” wine. In order to preserve this market exclusion and understanding of pests and disease is essential for the Australian Wine Industry.
- WGGA/WFA agree that shared responsibility and coordination of biosecurity responsibilities is essential, and agree that coordination between crop types will create synergies, in particular when dealing with “overlaps”, such as polyphagous pests. A cross – sectorial approach is not only desirable, it is essential.
- There is not enough information at this stage to decide which RD&E structure would be best, and WFA/WGGA will not promote a preference for this reason. When more information is forthcoming this decision may be possible.
- We have some concerns over the need to develop a new structure for this purpose. It would be ideal in terms of cost and efficiency if the responsibility could be met within existing RD&E structures. There is already a high degree of collaboration between and competency within these RD&E bodies, and if well managed would represent an attractive option.
- WFA/WGGA recognize the shortcomings of conventional CRC structure in regard to the typical short – term nature. This is counterproductive when trying to address a long term issues such as plant biosecurity, and makes building and retaining suitable human resource difficult.
- The paper does not address domestic control of plant biosecurity issues, which are often of concern to the wine industry.
- While RIRDC was mentioned as a possible option to manage biosecurity, it is suggested that RIRDC usually operate with emerging industries that do not have statutory levies in place. It may be difficult in developing one for this purpose.
- The RDCs are not well equipped to fund and manage biosecurity research as they do not have the relevant expertise, tend to be single industry focused in the R&D spend and can be influenced by the stronger industry advocates. Note that while Horticulture Innovation Australia covers numerous horticulture industries, it struggles to drive effective cross-industry collaboration; and
- There is much room for improvement in the national coordination within the biosecurity structure. The cycle indicated below (or something similar) needs to be considered in any discussion regarding the future of R&D, or indeed any component of the cycle. They are and should be, interrelated.



Concluding comments

A strong biosecurity system is essential for Australia's agriculture industry. The CRC for biosecurity has done an excellent job in integrating R&D on biosecurity within Australia, and that platform must not be wasted. Additional work is needed to consider an option/s that enhance or modify existing frameworks, mechanisms and organisational roles as distinct from creating a new, additional entity in what is an already crowded space. In considering such additional option/s, specific consideration of the current biosecurity governance arrangements and nationally agreed strategies need to be taken into account.

In particular, given the constrained resource space we work in, specific consideration of Commonwealth funding arrangements including the Commonwealth initiatives such as the "Agricultural Competitive White Paper", "Rural Research and Development for Profit" and the new "CRC for Developing Northern Australia" is required.

We would like to thank you for considering our submission and would be delighted to make further comments if required.

Please contact Andrew Weeks (WGGA) or Tony Battaglione (WFA) on tony@wfa.org.au if required.

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