

Tomato/Potato Psyllid and *Candidatus Liberibacter bacterium*

Market access to Australia

Biosecurity Australia officials will be here in mid November for the annual bilateral discussions. They have asked to be taken through all the science work that has been done on Liberibacter and will be visiting a major greenhouse business as part of that 'learning experience'.

The MAFBNZ testing results for seed transmission in tomato, capsicum and tamarillo have shown no positive results. The results have been peer reviewed. The trials have clearly shown that the Liberibacter is graft but not seed transmitted. Both reports were sent to Biosecurity Australia 22 October. Biosecurity Australia has indicated that their decision process for market access will begin once they have the full results. The risk assessment has already been started by Biosecurity Australia and the NZ science results should enable them to complete their risk assessment process quite quickly.

In light of the science results Industry would prefer to now see some positive results coming out of Australia as soon as practicable. It will soon be six months since the bans were put in place and quite frankly one has to wonder about how long these matters need to take from a purely border standards perspective? The same applies to Fiji & French Polynesia.

Nothing has moved re access to Fiji but our High Commission is actively engaged there and the hope is, now that the Director FQID is back in the country, things will start to move in the right direction. However this is still a political issue as well as a biosecurity one.

Technical discussions are continuing with French Polynesia around the requirements for fumigation and the shortened capsicum calyx but the traction with French Polynesia is slow. It appears that they are not much interested and you would have to suspect that both countries are watching events in Australia quite closely.

The incursion response model for the tomato/potato and the associated Liberibacter is under the management of MAFBNZ's strategic leadership group. They advise that they are developing a business case and with the science programme coming to a close it is time to get input from Industry. Any new work, as part of the business case, will require additional funding to be identified & found. MAFBNZ is to put a technical working group together to progress that and Industry will be involved in that. One of the key decisions will be 'who pays'. Too often government decides that industry should fund ongoing research and management of significant pest incursions without any realisation of the economic and social impacts from growers' inability to export; i.e. what is the 'public good to NZ' at stake here. It appears that if it's a meat or dairy issue the pendulum swings in a different direction to that for horticulture.

Industry commends the science work that MAFBNZ has undertaken, in particular regarding the seed transmission and psyllid vector work. However industry considers that more research is needed and wants MAFBNZ to undertake, or coordinate through Crown Research Institutes and other funding bodies, research to assist in clarifying a number of aspects of the biology of Liberibacter and its vector the tomato/potato psyllid.

This research on greenhouse vegetable crops should include or at least address the following questions:

- What strain of Tomato/potato psyllid is present in NZ.
- Confirm the host range of Liberibacter.
- Are alternative vectors present?
- What are the insecticide resistance issues in psyllids?
- What are effective control options?
- What are the geographical/climatic limits on the psyllid?

These may not all be matters for MAFBNZ to manage directly, however they are matters about which Industry sees a need for a coordinated government response. Industry believes that the seriousness of this bacterium and its vector on at least four sectors of horticulture; i.e. tomatoes, capsicums, potatoes and tamarillos, and potentially others; e.g. kumara, warrants a continuing government coordinated, and in part, funded approach to the research matters identified above and subsequent cost benefit analysis.