



MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

MEDIA RELEASE

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QUARANTINE PROTEST GROWS ON NORTH COAST: MACDONALD

North Coast pork producers again rallied against a Federal Coalition plan to allow potentially disease-infected pig meat into the country, during a visit today from NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald.

A group of local producers met with the Minister, and Labor candidate for Page, Kevin Bell, who officially launched a petition calling for the decision to be reversed, at a property near Numulgi, north of Lismore.

“The Federal Government should be held responsible for its decision to accept Biosecurity Australia’s proposals to allow more pig meat imports,” Mr Macdonald said.

“The Risk Assessment does not consider economic impacts of the decision, so it is up to the Federal Government to consider that instead.

“I am calling on Mr Truss to commit to compensate farmers if an outbreak of disease does occur as a result of this decision.

“The State Government lodged an official appeal which once again pointed to a CSIRO report which found there was a 95-99% risk of an exotic disease outbreak in Australia within 10 years if we allow these imports.

“While the appeals panel acknowledged having the report, they informed us that it did not merit reversing the finding, without explaining why this was so.

“I remain supportive of the recent Primary Industries Ministerial Council decision to ensure that Import Risk Assessments should remain scientifically-based.

“That is exactly why proper reasons for dismissing appeals should be given.

“How can farmers trust the Federal Government, which is meant to be looking after their interests, when the Coalition doesn’t even attempt to explain its decision?”

“It is also of grave concern that the floodgates appear to be opening only weeks after the Federal Government’s decision, with requests for new import access reportedly lodged from the US, the EU, Taiwan, Hungary, Mexico, Korea, South Africa, Chile and Brazil.

“The State Government’s position is categorical. We did not approve this Import Risk Assessment. We still do not agree with it. This is a Federal Government mess, and the Federal Government must do something to clean it up.”

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Bananas

Mr Macdonald said the local banana industry was also continuing its fight against similar proposals, which would allow more banana imports from the Philippines.

“The banana growers are just as desperate to keep disease out of their industries – such as black sigatoka and flaky moko,” Mr Macdonald said.

“Biosecurity Australia was previously forced to withdraw the draft banana Import Risk Assessment, because of major flaws in the process used to calculate the risk to industry.

“On Wednesday, they released the revised document – an addendum to the draft – which will be publicly reviewed for 60 days.

“I am pleased the Federal Government acknowledged the initial serious error and withdrew the draft, but there are still outstanding concerns.

“We will be examining this revised document in detail and making a submission on this issue.

“I would urge all banana growers to do the same.”

Industry statistics:

North Coast pork industry

- Annual production of \$26 million each year – 10% of total NSW production.
- 135 piggeries.
- Key pork producing regions around the State include Forbes, Grenfell, Young, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Corowa, Narrabri and the Far North Coast.

North Coast banana Industry

- There are about 720 banana growers on the North Coast.
- Annual production of \$60 million – 17% of national production.
- NSW produces 3 million cartons of bananas annually.

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