



MEDIA RELEASE – May 10, 2004

WA'S PORK INDUSTRY A 'SACRIFICIAL LAMB'

With the Federal Government's rejection today of all appeals against new import regimes for pigmeat, WA's 360 pork producers have described their industry as a 'sacrificial lamb'.

Boyup Brook producer and WA Pork Producers' Association (WAPPA) President, Stuart Coole said the ill-advised decision put at risk an industry worth more than \$100 million at the WA farmgate.

"Effectively, we have been sacrificed, on the altar of free trade.

"By not upholding appeals against Biosecurity Australia's new import quarantine policy for pigmeat, the Federal Government has not only forever jammed opened the entry door to one of the world's cleanest pork producing countries, but has opened the exit door for local producers already battling high costs and low returns.

"We're all for free trade, but we're all against letting in potentially disease riddled product from countries whose producers already benefit from distorted tariffs and government subsidies.

"We don't want hand-outs and simply ask for nothing more than a fair go from our Federal Government, who in an election year may pay a costly price for upsetting thousands of producers across Australia," Mr Coole said.

Australia is free of many of the exotic diseases affecting pigs overseas and is one of only three countries free of Post Weaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS), which costs the pig industry in the United States \$AUD 859 million a year.

The US would likely be one of the new exporters under the revised import regime, which previously only allowed pigmeat from Canada, Denmark and New Zealand.

"A PMWS outbreak would add at least 15 per cent to our cost of production, and we simply can't absorb such an unnecessary imposition," Mr Coole said.

WAPPA maintained that the handling of the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) process by Biosecurity Australia (BA) had been very poor.

“Today’s announcement comes prior to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs Committee inquiry into the pigmeat IRA and after the same Senate inquiry highlighted blatant errors in BA’s IRA for bananas.

“WAPPA now has little confidence in BA’s ability to undertake appropriate scientific analysis of risk,” Mr Coole concluded.

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