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## **PORK PRODUCTION A RISKY BUSINESS**

Pork imports, Biosecurity Australia's final Import Risk Analysis (IRA) and pig herd health status dominated discussion at the WA Pork Producers' Association (WAPPA) second general meeting for 2003-04.

Two major outcomes were support for Australian Pork Limited's appeal against the final IRA for imported pig meat and continued pressure for the introduction of country of origin labelling for meat.

Producers expressed anger at the possible introduction of the devastating Post-weaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS) via imported pig meat

They called on the state government to support industry's calls for a moratorium on imported pork from PMWS-affected countries until more conclusive scientific research was completed.

Describing PMWS as the "Aids of the pig world", Boyup Brook producer and WAPPA President Stuart Coole said an incursion would ruin the WA industry.

"How can the government say industry is at a low risk of incursion and allow imports, while the science of how PMWS is transmitted and whether cooking and curing kills it, is unknown?

"Producers must not be forced to risk their livelihoods and Australia's reputation as having the world's cleanest pig herd.

"If it can be demonstrated that PMWS was caused by imported pig meat, under the protocols designed by Biosecurity Australia, then the government should compensate the Australian pork industry for the loss of its herd health status," Mr Coole said.

Producers agreed that with current and projected levels of pork imports, country of origin labelling should be introduced.

The Food Standards Code excludes non-tinned meat and it is therefore not a requirement to label produce with its country of origin.

Mr Coole said shoppers should be able to differentiate Australian bacon and ham from imported Canadian or Danish produce, as they could for other food products.

“Consumers want to know what they’re buying and where it’s from.”

Gingin producer and former WAPPA President, Chris Keene, who has rejoined WAPPA Executive, following Peter McKenzie’s resignation and move interstate, suggested a legislated promotional levy on pig meat imports.

Currently Australian producers paid a \$1.65 marketing levy per pig.

“Why should Australian producers be the only ones paying the levy, when 20 per cent of produce is imported and this sector is growing every year?

“We’re effectively paying to promote imported products ahead of our own,” Mr Keene said.

[www.wappa.com.au](http://www.wappa.com.au)

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