

# **PCN Harmonisation meetings Ausveg**

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PT07044

PCN Harmonisation Meeting

PT07044 (PCN Harmonisation Meeting)  
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## **Media Summary**

The project to put together a National PCN plan was instigated by the Potato Growing members of the board of AUSVEG. The need for a National Plan has been paramount for the potato industry, but past attempts had failed for various reasons.

This time the project was designed to see a PCN Management document that will become a standard for the National industry.

The beginning of the project saw universal agreement amongst the invited members on the Working Group that now was the time to get something together to deal with PCN with a National focus. The meeting was based around identifying what needed to be done in order to get a National plan together. Various projects were identified, which include an investigation into the way PCN outbreaks would be handled interstate, and the main one being a risk management plan – the document that the Plan will be based around. The existing ‘PCN technical document’ that was developed by the National Technical Working group was designated to also be used as a base document that Scientific based arguments for certain parts of the Management plan can be argued against.

This project was centered around the first meeting of the PCN Management Plan Working Group. This meeting saw the negotiation begin on a State by State basis as to what would be required to put together a National plan, with an agreement already that a National plan is far overdue and much needed. From this meeting there was a strong push continue project funding so that a National PCN Plan can go through to implementation stage at both State and grower levels.

The completion and enactment of a National plan for PCN should remain high on the priority list for both fresh and processing potatoes.

## Technical Summary

The first detected Australian outbreak of potato cyst nematode occurred in Western Australia in 1986. It was detected in Victoria for the first time in 1991 and subsequent testing across all districts and perceived high risk areas in 1991 and 1992 identified a total of thirteen sites where PCN was found to occur. All thirteen sites were retested in late 2002 and 2003 and PCN was not detected in ten of these sites. Three had viable and potentially infective cysts. In 2003 and 2004, PCN was found in the Kooweerup region, and currently 10 paddocks are known to have infestations. Potatoes are grown throughout Victoria, and although the size of the individual PCN outbreaks has been small, all Victorian potato growers have been affected. Interstate buyers, potato growers, exporters and governments are demanding assurances of freedom from the pest.

A policy by industry on how to deal with current and future outbreaks is essential. Since 1991, all seed potato crops submitted for Certification have been surveyed for PCN using National Sampling Standards. PCN sampling procedures introduced for Certified Seed Crops include: All cropping areas of Generation 1 to 4 must be tested unless the class is submitted as Certified. Currently 25% of all areas of Generation 5 (crop for certification), and other areas submitted as Certified must be tested - generally the crop chosen is from the paddock with the shortest rotation.

Between 1991 and 1997, 241 properties and 8,062 ha of potato growing paddocks were surveyed across Victoria. The surveys have indicated that the outbreaks are confined to isolated pockets close to Melbourne. The overall goal is to ensure the continued viability of the Victorian Potato Industry through containing the pest yet allowing the industry to compete in domestic and export markets.

The initial 1995 draft Statement of Policy with regard to Potato Cyst Nematode was developed by the Potato Growers' Council, Victoria (a commodity group within the Victorian Farmers Federation) on behalf of all Victorian potato growers.

The Revised Statement of Policy 1998 was subsequently developed and endorsed by all sections of the Victorian potato industry: potato seed producers, growers of potatoes for processing, and fresh market potato growers and marketing sectors. It was intended that this revised statement of policy would lead to various regulatory changes within Victoria and interstate to facilitate a more rational approach to potato cyst nematode containment, control and eventual eradication. A project was created under the guidance of Horticulture Australia to facilitate this process in 1999 but by the end of 2003 no national plan or national approach to PCN had been achieved.

The Victorian Potato Growers Council resolved in late 2003 to review and update the revised statement of policy in conjunction with the Victorian government. This 2004 policy statement is the result of this review.

The Statement of Policy shall form the basis for administration of regulations to be included in the Plant Health and Plant Products Act (Vic) 1995, and assist in the development of a national PCN policy statement and an industry Code of Practice for all potato growers. This project aims to develop a National PCN trading protocol across Australia by bringing together key players in the potato industry at a National workshop to develop a discussion paper that will be circulated to industry for broad consultation. Following consultation a final agreed protocol will be established vis application to the Federal Government.

## **Introduction**

The aim of the PCN management plan group is to formulate a plan to deal with PCN in Australia. This plan will not involve directives that will put growers out of business, nor will it involve significant changes to good farming practices that should already be standard across the industry. What it will do is provide growers across Australia with the knowledge and understanding of the nematode, and hopefully reduce the personal impact of a detection if and when another is made, by ensuring contingency plans and protocols are in place to deal with the pest when it is found.

The National PCN Management Plan Working Group is comprised of the six growers who are members of the AUSVEG potato board, the AUSVEG CEO, senior quarantine officials from each State, as well as representatives from Horticulture Australia, (HAL), Plant Health Australia (PHA) the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), leading nematologists from around the country, as well as representatives from the processing industry and packing industries.

Currently Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia are doing regular samples, with Western Australia seeking freedom from this pest and Victoria intent on ensuring that all outbreaks have been found and are being controlled. The other States have had some samples done in the past, and some are continuing to sample under certified seed schemes and requirements from processors or packers. It is imperative that this pest is found and dealt with before it gets out of hand, which may be too late already. It is better to find and control it now, and not wait until we have the numbers, and the species, that the rest of the world has to deal with.

The project to put together a National PCN plan was instigated by the Potato Growing members of the board of AUSVEG. The need for a National Plan has been paramount for the potato industry, but past attempts had failed for various reasons.

This time the project was designed to see a PCN Management document that will become a standard for the National industry.

The beginning of the project saw universal agreement amongst the invited members on the Working Group that now was the time to get something together to deal with PCN with a National focus. The meeting at the Hilton Hotel Conference centre in Melbourne was based around identifying what needed to be done in order to get a National plan together. Various individual projects were identified, which include an investigation into the way PCN outbreaks would be handled interstate, and the main one being a risk management plan – the document that the Plan will be based around. The existing ‘PCN technical document’ that was developed by the National Technical Working group was designated to also be used as a base document that Scientific based arguments for certain parts of the Management plan can be argued against.

Despite a feeling of negativity from the broader industry, the Management Plan Working Group went on to meet a second time, with the agreement from all State representatives that a recommendation of under grader sampling should be taken out to the broader industry. A document investigating the sampling methods was commissioned, and the document was deemed feasible by all on the Working Group, with only a few amendments suggested. The actual implementation of the sampling caused a halt in the industry however, with the question about who is to fund the project still unanswered.

## **Materials & Methods**

A working table was drafted from the meeting, which addresses issues and questions that need to be answered before a draft PCN plan could be put together. Each member of the group was given the Victorian PCN Management Plan, the previous 1995 attempt at putting together a National plan and other PCN related documents that would be essential in putting together this document. The meeting identified the basis of the plan would be a Risk Analysis, detailing each potential pathway for the pest transfer possibility and associating a level of risk and a mitigation step. A small working group was put together to work on the risk analysis outside the meeting.

The aim of the meeting was to get all of the key industry people and representatives from the regulatory bodies throughout Australia together to discuss the current, and future direction of PCN management in Australia.

In order to bring together members of important and relevant sectors from around Australia, extensive communication was required to identify conflicting schedules and other meetings. There was also the difficulty in arranging the meetings to not coincide with growers peak busy seasons, which differ around areas of Australia.

The meeting dates were arranged via e-mail and telephone communication, with a range of dates offered and the most suitable one chosen after all members of the group came forth with feedback. Once the date for the meeting was set, the room was booked and conversations with the Hilton took place on a weekly basis to organise the meals, accommodation and the meeting room.

Flights for the AUSVEG growers, booking rooms for interstate travellers and other arrangements that need to be made before the meeting, mostly administration also took place in the weeks before the meeting took place.

Electronic mail was used to send out the information relevant to the meeting, prior to the meeting date, and all documents were also available in hard copy on the day.



## **Results**

The meeting saw a significant step forward in the progress towards a National Management plan.

A brief terms of reference was drawn up, as well as the group identifying issues that needed more investigation or research and work in order for them to become part of the plan. This list was made into a table called a 'Work Plan' and is attached as part of Appendix I. The Work Plan will provide the basis of the final plan.

The group all agreed that a National PCN plan was long overdue and definitely the right time to get one done. The group acknowledged it would not be a quick process and a great deal of information will need to be gathered before steps are made to finalise the plan.

Minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix I.

## **Discussion**

The meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007, was successful in beginning the long process of creating a National Management plan. With the enthusiastic involvement of both interstate and local growers, and regulators, as well as National leaders in bio-security and plant health agencies, the plan is getting the best input possible from the different sectors of the industry.

The noticeably positive attitude from all members of the group towards the project is encouraging, and while that attitude is there it should be used to the advantage of the National industry. More meetings will be required for all States to sign off on the plan and be comfortable about taking it for promotion to their growers and industry.

There needs to be continued project funding so that a National PCN Plan can go through to implementation stage at both State and grower levels.

The completion and enactment of a National plan for PCN should remain high on the priority list for both fresh and processing potato industries.

## **Technology Transfer**

The involvement of the AUSVEG communications plan was paramount to this project. Getting the information out to the growers is the key to this project and through the 'Potatoes Australia' magazine and the broader industry contacts has been invaluable in ensuring that the growers around Australia know what is being done for them with their R&D money.

State based organisations have been fed through information about the project so that it can be added to their publications.

There were also National media radio and newspaper interviews conducted regarding aspects of the project.

## **Recommendations**

There needs to be continued project funding so that a National PCN Plan can go through to implementation stage at both State and grower levels.

The completion and enactment of a National plan for PCN should remain high on the priority list for both fresh and processing potato industries.

## Appendix I

February 2/07

# PCN Management Group Meeting

## Testing

Suggestion for under grading lines for coarse screen,  
to determine if PCN is present, not to see if free from infection,  
if resistant variety is grown, there will not be a detection

State Agreement;

QLD: testing under grading lines, more details if detected

NSW: good place to start

SA: packing sheds good idea

WA: 5x5 grid in place in area of freedom project

VIC: seed potatoes; 10x10 test in controlled area,

TAS: independent sampling by Govt, 15% crop, FTEx1 (\$60K), 10X10 grid

Other comments:

Period of sampling, \$100/sample collection + \$100/test, 3xseason,

Money from HAL if possible?? Independent sampling needed to be sure it is done correctly

## Ware potatoes: testing protocols, national protocol in place, 10x10 testing

Current States Situation;

TAS: export crop tested. 20km range prohibition. No trade from Vic

QLD: 20km restriction from infested area.

SA: total prohibition within 20Km of known infestation.

WA: high level of testing in place, and restrictions on trade with Vic

VIC: Some ware already tested for interstate trade and factory access. 20km around infested zones – strict protocols concerning trade from within the area.

Discussion;

Science AND local growers are drivers for regulations development

Need to be mindful of increased costs

New rules: if not tested, then presumed that infected

Segregation of areas based on distance? Circle of infection rather than state boundaries, are circles the best measure?

Use zones of infection based on testing? Minimized if risk management procedures are in place

National testing procedure in place to support this

# Risk management of infected areas

Tradeoff risk zone area, provided that mitigating procedures in place, potential to reduce to 2Km zone based on scientific research from overseas.

Responsibility and costs should be shared by grower and govt.

Pest free areas should not be based on State boundaries, based nationally agreed protocols, Currently based on fruit fly model – unsatisfactory.

- Area freedom definition not based on State boundary?

## Seed potatoes

What are the procedures? Is this the right approach?

Certified Seed industry has been tested in VIC since PCN was found. All seed potatoes should be tested, in all States.

National seed certification scheme is monitored by SPAG, all States happy with the procedure

One off seed, own grown seed – this is not certified under SPAG, commercial reality demands alternative sources of seed – very difficult to police.

## National testing scheme:

PCN test for seed - educate growers to expect certification

Clear commitment by all parties to PCN certification

Awareness of problem and

300K tonnes comes from one off seed.

## Packing facilities:

Gembrook is currently only tested known infested ware potato production area.

Packing facilities need to be able to handle potatoes from infested and free areas.

VIC model uses segregation techniques in packing sheds, protocols are being developed for appropriate levels of protection (in discussion with other states). Audits are in place and packers have changed their own businesses to handle potatoes from potentially infested land.

Further down the supply chain need to build awareness of PCN problem

- Gembrook Protocols to be distributed for comment by all States

## National PCN code of practice; protocols to be agreed on

1. Risk management analysis
2. How to deal with new outbreak
3. National surveillance – under the grading table (early awareness)
4. Testing of seed potatoes
5. Testing of ware potatoes
6. Testing of processing potatoes
7. Packing house procedures
8. Movement of infected potatoes
9. Movement of machinery, materials and associated equipment
10. Area freedom definition
11. Harmonized state regulations

Consistent with existing PHA industry biosecurity plan ( use this framework to develop specifics to PCN)

Subject to review as research/information comes to hand - WIP

## Work Plan

| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Information Available</b>                            | <b>Persons responsible</b>   | <b>Date Due</b>                         |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Risk management plan (pathway analysis; then management plan)  | LOTS: Golden cyst (USA) Draft plan, previous mgmt plan, | <b>David Beardsell</b> , PHA, Des Jennings and 3 growers, Brian Peter Whittle, Satendra Kumar, Greg Walker | Pathway analysis: 30/3/07<br>Mgmt plan: |
| 2. Once a outbreak has been identified what action do you take?   | LOTS: Gembrook documents, statutory requirements        | <b>DPIVIC</b>  | 30/04/07                                |
| 3. National surveillance – under the grading table (early awareness)  | Little: protocol existing (Idaho)                       | <b>Bruce Baker</b> , Steve Page, John Slack, James Planck,   | 07/03/07*                               |
| 4. Testing of seed potatoes   | LOTS:   | Enacted-SPAG   | Done*                                   |
| 5. Testing of ware potatoes: characterising agreed protocols, management zones, differential status and procedures                              | Little: segmentation                                    | <b>Peter Whittle</b> , Satendra Kumar, Bill Washington, Bronwyn Wiseman                                    | 30/04/07                                |
| 6. Testing of processing potatoes: characterising agreed protocols, management zones, associated properties, differential status and procedures | Existing protocols: state based                         | <b>John Slack</b> , Chris Adriaansen, Bruce Baker  | 01/03/07*                               |
| 7. Packing house/retailers procedures for preventing cross contamination  | Protocol being evaluated                                | <b>DPIVIC</b> , Steve Page   | 01/03/07*                               |
| 8. Management of infected potatoes; waste management, vehicles, movement to market  | Existing Smith's protocol                               | Koo Wee Rup  | Done*                                   |
| 9. Movement of machinery, materials, bags and associated equipment  | Existing protocols                                      | <b>Laura Bowles</b>  | 01/03/07                                |
| 10. Area freedom definition: consistent testing history,  | Guidelines  | <b>Ryan Wilson</b> , DAFF Shashi Sharma  | TBA                                     |
| 11. Harmonized movement provisions between States   |   | <b>Pat Sharkey</b> , Domestic Quarantine Market Access Working Group                                       | TBA                                     |
| 12. National hygiene awareness of PCN   | Existing protocols                                      | <b>Laura Bowles</b> - Koo Wee Rup protocols  | Ausveg website                          |

The names in **bold** will be the team leaders for each task.