



Building a stronger, smarter biosecurity system through partnerships

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As we move into a third year of global disruption to the movement of goods and people, it is more important than ever that the department works with industry to support the COVID-19 recovery.

Many of the things we take for granted have been impacted by the pandemic. Increased volumes of arriving mail and cargo, and a greater array of exotic pest and disease threats, are also placing unprecedented pressure on our national biosecurity system.

The government, through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is investing in a range of new initiatives and technologies to ensure Australia is able to meet the biosecurity challenges that lie ahead.

Underpinning many of these initiatives is the Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030 strategy. Released in May 2021, this keynote strategy is the Australian Government's roadmap to build a stronger, smarter biosecurity system focused on better regulation and partnerships, and smarter border clearance processes that are data driven and technology enabled.

Despite all the challenges of the last two years, the shipping industry has kept the goods Australians rely on coming to our shores, helping also to deliver goods to our trading partners and maintaining Australia's access to international markets.

Some initiatives in the pipeline that will benefit the industry are outlined below, including those aimed at reducing congestion at the border.

Tackling biofouling and ballast water risks

Biofouling and ballast water discharge

is one the most significant threats to our unique marine ecosystem and the agribusinesses that depend on a pest-free marine environment.

To prevent the introduction and distribution of marine pests, we are stepping up our monitoring and management of biofouling and ballast water.

We will be seeking additional pre-arrival information from vessels about biofouling management practices. This will help us identify vessels applying sufficient and proactive practices and will inform our risk assessments.

Field trials are expected to commence in early 2022 to pilot the use of underwater remotely operated vehicles to conduct vessel inspections. We have engaged the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis to develop an automated analysis system that will shorten the amount of time it takes to review hull inspection videos and images.

To ensure that vessels comply with international requirements for controlling and managing ballast water, we are requiring most trading vessels to install an International Maritime Organisation-approved ballast water management system (BWMS).

Over the next 12 months, our inspectors will deploy newly purchased indicative sampling devices to verify BWMS compliance. These requirements will also apply for vessels moving between Australian ports.

For information on how to comply with regulations in Australian waters, view the Australian Ballast Water Management Requirements at awe.gov.au/ballast-water-requirements

We are establishing a robust and cost-

effective approach to marine pest surveillance in our ports, having invested in molecular detection methods for pests, with trials to be carried out this year in some South Australian and Victorian ports.

Transforming arrivals

We are improving our policies, processes and systems to better manage the biosecurity risks of arriving maritime vessels and aircraft.

Over four years, our Conveyance Arrivals Modernisation (CAM) transformation program will:

- reduce redundant pre-arrival data entry for industry by tapping into commercial data sources;
- provide for instantaneous tracking of vessels, enabling better targeted biosecurity interventions, real-time pratique and reducing potential delays for industry;
- share Marine Arrivals Reporting System (MARS) data with port authorities and other state and commonwealth agencies, saving industry from having to resubmit;
- provide a seamless, intuitive digital experience for clients.

Significant upgrades made to MARS will also make it easier for shippers to understand the biosecurity requirements they must meet.

We do not anticipate any increased regulatory burden for industry from this transformation program, rather the changes should help to improve industry productivity by streamlining the arrivals pathway and border clearances. The department will shortly engage with the shipping industry on this program

and invite participants to a series of discovery and co-design workshops.

The department has also established a National Maritime Centre (NMC) to better support the maritime industry by providing direct access to skilled maritime regulators. The NMC is recruiting additional officers in each state to provide services over a larger span of hours and across a number of time zones.

Container Scanning Trial

The department is supporting trials to improve detection rates of pests, plant material and soil on or in shipping containers through the use of different and emerging technologies.

These include cameras mounted on port gantry cranes to screen the outside of containers during standard ship to shore movements, and identify any contaminants and visible defects; a hand-held hyperspectral camera, capable of detecting even very small pests or particles in suboptimal light conditions on the underside of a container or in cracks and crevices inside the container; and a mobile application tool to link inspection results for the container to the records obtained from the crane-installed cameras.

The department has partnered with DP World to trial these initiatives at the Port of Brisbane. If successful, these technologies will be a game changer and enable future arriving containers to be identified and screened in real time and for decisions to be made remotely by the department on further intervention. This will speed up movement of the containers off the wharf and distribution of goods to market, leading to cost savings for industry.

Green Lane Trial for Imported Cargo

As part of the Australian Government's Deregulation Agenda, a proof-of-concept trial is underway to test if equal or better biosecurity outcomes can be achieved by using existing importer assurance systems to manage biosecurity risk across their supply chains.

The trial is expected to run until May 2022 and, if successful, will lead to more permanent arrangements for highly compliant importers that will reduce regulatory costs and border congestion.

The Biosecurity Portal

The Biosecurity Portal is our new 24/7 online capability that will enable importers, brokers and approved arrangement providers to request and manage import inspection bookings online.

The portal, which is currently being tested with a select number of clients, integrates the Australian Government's MyGovID to authenticate users with the Agriculture Import Management System (AIMS). If successful, it will make the day-to-day business of managing inspection bookings smoother and more efficient and result in more efficient movement of goods coming through the ports.

Enhancements to the Cargo Online Lodgement System (COLS)

Late lodging of documentation in COLS for sea freight continues to contribute to delays at the border experienced by clients, with approximately 60% of sea freight lodgements being submitted within one day or less from the estimated date of arrival.

To address this, the department made enhancements to COLS in September 2021 to enable the department to recognise late lodgements for sea cargo when a broker submits documents within two business days or less of their estimated arrival date. Accordingly, brokers and importers who submit early lodgements will receive timely assessment and enable their goods to be cleared through the ports more efficiently.

Document Assessment

The department receives approximately six million documents each year for assessment purposes. This is expected to increase with growing cargo and new and emerging biosecurity risks associated with imported cargo.

To reduce the delays in the movement of containers, we have worked with a third party to develop a world first technology and algorithms to automate the Minimum Documentation (Min Doc) assessment component to manage the increased volumes and enable our staff to focus on the higher risk parts of the assessment process.

The addition of 'Bots' or 'Digital Workers'

will speed up the assessment process and reduce delays for the industry where documents are lodged in accordance with the Min Docs policy and import conditions.

We are also using the same type of automation solution to streamline the ICS screening process for biosecurity officers processing Self Assessed Clearances (SACs), providing greater visibility of current and emerging biosecurity risks, as well as offering time efficiencies in processing SACs. Quicker processing is a big win for those operating within the import industry for faster border clearance.

Preparing our workforce

All of this investment in technology and reforms is nothing without developing our most important asset – our workforce.

We are training officers in essential operational skills and regulatory tools to help them better manage evolving complex biosecurity risks.

We have commenced a significant overhaul of the documents that outline our policies, processes and procedures to enable our staff to perform their tasks with improved results.

In addition, we are looking to adopt emerging technology, such as Virtual and Augmented Reality, to improve workforce capability and increase our staff's engagement with industry and our international partners.

With a more efficient and upskilled workforce we will be able to deliver better regulatory services to the shipping industry and in doing so, improve both import and export outcomes for agricultural industries and businesses.

We are committed to working with the shipping industry to ensure that Australia can get on with business smoothly and efficiently and deliver a great Biosecurity outcome, despite these uncertain times.

Further information on Biosecurity 2030 is available at awe.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/commonwealth-biosecurity-2030. ▲