



Department of
Primary Industries

The role of post-border biosecurity in international supply chains in New South Wales

Executive Summary

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Clancy T¹, Opoku G², Schembri N³, Wallington¹

¹Business Development and Innovation, NSW DPI, Orange 2800

²Business Development and Innovation, NSW DPI, Parramatta 2124

³Compliance Education and Behaviour Change; Peri Urban Program, NSW DPI, Newington 2127

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

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Executive Summary

There are a number of high risk hitchhiker pests whose entry to Australia via the international supply chain and logistics industry would significantly impact agricultural production in NSW and nationally.

The international supply chain and logistics sector is a collection of importers, exporters, customs brokers, stevedores, freight forwarders, logistics service providers and industry groups operating with importing and exporting freight internationally. Each stakeholder group has its own discrete set of responsibilities within the supply chain to ensure the safe, secure and effective importing or exporting of goods globally from New South Wales.

In the 2017-18 Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) season, there were two post-border detections of live bugs. This led to a nationally cost-shared emergency response between agricultural industries and governments under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) (PHA, 2018). The ensuing response saw swift and effective measures put in place - risk assessment, fumigation, trapping and monitoring - to prove freedom from the pest.

The NSW Government was alerted to its limited understanding of the sector's biosecurity awareness or sentiment following the 2017-2018 BMSB detections. The incident highlighted the need to understand what motivates and demotivates the international supply chain and logistics sector to report on biosecurity-related activity. By understanding this, the NSW Government can ensure its engagement activities concerning the sector are as efficient and effective as possible.

This project applied a human-centred approach using ethnographic research methods. This research method is fast becoming recognised in the public sector as an effective way to collect data and insights that may not have been uncovered through standard consultation strategies for policy design, regulation and service delivery. It achieves this through genuine, one-on-one consultation with affected businesses, community organisations and individuals to understand their real-world experiences and problems.

Direct engagement through ethnographic research with the international supply chain and logistics sector allowed a deeper understanding of the sector to inform the recommendation and development of a future suite of communication and engagement materials and strategies by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI).

Where we travelled



Port Botany

Western Sydney

Sydney CBD

Marulan

Dubbo

Direct engagement with



What we heard

“

I don't know what it will do if it [BMSB] attacks. Never been told and never gone into detail. I would know what it looks like, I just wouldn't know the risk.

- Worked in the industry for 25 years

“

There should be a leaflet across Australia. I didn't know that the bugs could destroy bananas and wineries. I wasn't aware of that. I think if that information was out there people would think 'hang on a second, I like wine' I should report this. The delay [in processing imports] is better than us getting invaded by a species.

“

[They] don't expect you to be an expert - report all findings.

- message given to staff at W2

“

I guess for me it was an eye-opener. The perception if you see something that's live in a container you are going to get fined. And that's incorrect.

“

We get about five bulletins a day in different mediums (from both departments and industry bodies) and we just archive it as they come through; it's biosecurity spam. 5% is probably relevant to the team.

“

You can't help but get resistant and defensive to quarantine as you only see them when you get a slap on the wrist.

Key insights

- Truck drivers transporting goods within the international supply chain sector do not sufficiently engage with their cargo and therefore are not a key demographic to target biosecurity awareness strategies at.
- Shipping containers arriving at the Ports are often not opened and/or unpacked until they reach warehouses and distribution centres further down the international supply chain.
- The international supply chain sector tends to shift blame concerning biosecurity non-compliance to other stakeholder groups and businesses within the chain. However, one stakeholder group unanimously agreed upon by the sector regarding poor biosecurity practice was warehouse and distribution centre businesses.
- There is a divide between regional-based members of the sector and metropolitan-based members. One regional-based business believes metro companies actively avoid rural tailgate inspection by redirecting cargo to a metropolitan address prior to transporting the goods regionally.
- Understanding of what biosecurity means is inconsistent across the sector. Definitions ranged from explosive material and human waste to bugs and beetles that could harm the Australian environment.
- Businesses that either had staff trained in biosecurity protocols (such as customs brokers) or worked alongside federal biosecurity officers had more positive sentiment towards biosecurity and reporting. Companies without these influences tended to have lower engagement with biosecurity.
- Sector businesses are frustrated with the time delays and inconvenience caused by the procedures that need to occur during BMSB season at the ports. In their view, the Department of Agriculture (DoA) is slow, unresponsive and unorganised which creates a divide between government and industry.
- Companies that had a trusting, transparent culture had higher engagement with biosecurity procedure. When staff were assured no personal or business related repercussions (e.g. fines, termination) would arise from reporting a potential biosecurity risk, staff were more likely to engagement with biosecurity surveillance and reporting,
- Companies have been unmotivated to report potential biosecurity risks when previous attempts to do so were not followed up on by the DoA.
- Companies have become resistant and defensive towards DoA compliance officers due to engagement with the sector on DoA's behalf only occurring when undergoing auditing or fining, which carry negative connotations.
- The sector rated their relationship with the government overall as poor. With communications too frequent and generally irrelevant to most of the sector. Communications from DoA were also jargon heavy and often were not properly understood by staff operating within the sector.
- There was also very little awareness of NSW DPI within the sector, with most companies having trouble delineating the department from the federal DoA.
- There was a push by the sector for DoA compliance officers to proactively develop relationships with the sector outside of auditing and penalising. This would assist with the education and awareness of current biosecurity issues relating to the sector.



Identified Opportunities

The research data collected over the course of the project was synthesised by the team and workshopped for potential opportunities to drive engagement in the sector.

These potential opportunities are:

- Place more focus on contextualising the risk of BMSB, and other exotic pests, in Australia. Use tangible examples, such as financial hardship for farmers, or detrimental effects on native flora and fauna or recreational activities to evoke emotional or personal connections.
- Focus on plain English representation of step-by-step process when spotting something unusual or suspicious. Include very obvious contact information.
- Include 'report to your manager' as part of the call to action for reporting, as employees will generally place priority on their company's procedures over government procedure.
- Conduct further research with warehouse and distribution centre businesses and staff, as the research pointed to this business group as a noticeable 'weak link' in the supply chain concerning biosecurity awareness and sentiment.
- Use a gamification/digital approach to reporting, which would educate staff on sightings of foreign pests like the BMSB.
- Potential for a public-private partnership to deliver biosecurity awareness/educational training across the supply chain sector.





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