



# The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

## Minister for Primary Industries

## Minister for Small Business

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Friday September 2, 2011

#### PLANNED RESPONSE IN NSW TO NZ APPLE IMPORTS

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has convened a meeting of NSW apple industry grower leaders and biosecurity specialists to build a strategic and co-ordinated response to the importation of NZ apples.

“The NSW Government remains disappointed with the Federal Government’s decision to allow New Zealand apples into Australia and thereby expose our apple industry to exotic pests and diseases, including the potentially devastating *Fireblight*,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

“However, the reality is that the decision has been made and NSW now needs to formulate a plan that effectively and efficiently reduces the risks to our local industry yet complies with World Trade Organisation rules.”

Katrina Hodgkinson said the meeting yesterday at the NSW Department of Primary Industries’ Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute considered a number of potential response measures.

“The meeting agreed that industry and the NSW DPI can and shall work together to address the key biosecurity risks factors and improve public awareness to minimise the risk of exotic pests and diseases getting into our commercial apple regions, principally around Bilpin, Camden, Orange, Bathurst, Batlow and Tumut.

“The meeting was also advised that further information will be sought from the Commonwealth on inspection activity and protocols – especially at the entry-points in NSW, and legal advice is to be provided regarding quarantine zones and WTO compliance,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

Other measures discussed at the meeting included:

- reviewing and testing emergency disease response plans to quickly and effectively manage an exotic pest or disease outbreak in the apple and pear industry
- working to reduce the risks posed by neglected apple and pear trees or abandoned orchards
- country-of-origin labelling
- point-of-sale (retail) disease awareness materials.

There was also broad agreement that compliance and enforcement programs, such as exclusion zones, are very expensive to establish and maintain, are not failsafe, and may not be WTO compliant. It was noted that if an outbreak of *Fireblight* does occur, a quarantine zone can be implemented.

Katrina Hodgkinson added that industry and NSW DPI specialists will prioritise their work to refine the NSW response to imported NZ apples.

Editors note: *Fireblight* is a contagious disease affecting apples, pears, loquat, crabapples, quinces, hawthorn, cotoneaster, pyracantha, raspberry and some other rosaceous plants are also vulnerable. It is a serious concern to apple and pear producers, as under optimal conditions, it can destroy an entire orchard in a single growing season. The causal pathogen is a bacterium - *Erwinia amylovora*. The disease is believed to be indigenous to North America.