



# CATTLE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

## SUBMISSION

3 December 2021

Mr Andrew Tongue  
Co-Chair NBC Secretariate  
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment  
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Via email: [nationalbiosecuritystrategy@awe.gov.au](mailto:nationalbiosecuritystrategy@awe.gov.au)

Dear National Biosecurity Strategy Project Team

### Re: National Biosecurity Strategy – Initial Consultation

Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) is the peak industry organisation representing Australia's grass-fed cattle producers. Established in 1979, CCA brings together all state-based farming organisations (SFOs) representing cattle producers in their jurisdiction, associate member organisations with close connections to the cattle industry, and individual cattle producers. In 2019-20, there were over 51,300 beef cattle production businesses across Australia.

In 2020, Australia was the world's second largest beef and veal exporter after Brazil. Over 1 million tonnes of beef was exported, valued at \$9.6 billion<sup>1</sup>. In addition, Australia exported 1.05 million head of live cattle in 2020<sup>2</sup>. While boxed beef and live cattle exports were down year-on-year, in 2019–20, Australia's red meat and livestock industry turnover was \$69.9 billion, up 5 per cent on revised 2018–19 figures<sup>3</sup>. As an industry that exports over 70 per cent of its product, Australia's animal disease profile and biosecurity protocols are fundamental to providing ongoing market access.

A priority under the red meat and livestock industry's strategic plan ([Red Meat 2030](#)) is to *set the standard for world class animal, health, welfare, biosecurity and production practices*, achieved through:

- Ensuring a whole-of-industry animal health and welfare standards and systems
- Adopting animal health, welfare, biosecurity, and production best practices
- Optimising animal production for the environment and market.

Biosecurity also features under the *Our Markets* and *Our Environment* priority areas as the red meat industry views it as a key component of food security and sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> Meat and Livestock Australia, State of the Industry Report 2021

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.awe.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/live-animals/live-animal-export-statistics/livestock-exports-by-market>

<sup>3</sup> Meat and Livestock Australia, State of the Industry Report 2021

To enable this, CCA develops policy and supports investment in leading science to encourage and support Australian beef producers to implement best management practice of on-farm biosecurity and improve incorporation of biosecurity into broader herd health management.

### **CCA Biosecurity Policy**

Like many other agricultural sectors, CCA has prioritised its focus on biosecurity and is advocating with other industry organisations for more robust policy and systems. CCA's strategic policy focuses on:

- Fostering a consistent, national approach to biosecurity across the beef supply chain, and continued advocacy for an assured, sustainable funding model to support the system.
- Ensure industry engagement at all levels in the development of a national biosecurity framework.
- Agricultural businesses that incorporate biosecurity into their regular operations.

Integral to achieving these outcomes is the development of a national whole-of-industry integrity system that delivers consistency in policy across the supply chain and guarantees food safety and by extension, market access.

### **National Biosecurity Strategy Consultation**

In response to the National Biosecurity Strategy initial consultation paper (the paper), CCA welcomes the opportunity to make specific comments regarding the items raised in the paper.

Protecting Australia from the increasing risks posed by pests and diseases is a continual challenge. To be fit for purpose, Australia's biosecurity system must be equipped to address the challenges of today as well as emerging risks.

A National Biosecurity Strategy needs to draw together the collective views of organisations and individuals across the biosecurity system, clearly outline roles of participants in the system and unite the different operators with the aim of moving towards the same goal. Most importantly, the strategy must be owned by all participants in Australia's biosecurity system.

With the CCA Biosecurity Policy in mind, we provide the following commentary on the focus areas proposed in the paper.

#### ***Shared responsibility***

The transformation of Australia's existing biosecurity system, to one that will identify and better respond to increasingly complex threats, is reliant on all participants in the system understanding and having a well-defined responsibility within the biosecurity continuum. The system involves more than traditionally segmented government and industry players and the National Biosecurity Strategy needs to reflect the entirety of participants in the system, drawing upon individual sector strengths.

New ways of working are required so that all Australians identify with their role in the biosecurity system. The strategy can facilitate this by understanding how the different components of the Australian biosecurity system can work together more effectively and develop communications, tools, resources, and systems to support engagement and participation. It may be helpful for a Memorandum of Understanding to be developed between industry and governments that would provide clarity around the role of each party in raising awareness of any new scheme and ensuring compliance to the maximum extent possible.

The exponential change in the challenges facing Australia's biosecurity system make the development of Australia's first National Biosecurity Strategy timely. Key strategic themes of focus areas within the strategy need to facilitate a shift towards a more collaborative government-industry-community partnership

whereby biosecurity practices are part of producer, supply chain, community and government norms, attitudes and culture, and are regarded as an essential part of the Australian story.

International border operations provide two principal functions as part of the biosecurity continuum, import regulations and export certification. Both functions are intimately linked as they rely on each other to achieve interdependent and collaborative outcomes. This includes the emergence of diseases affecting food safety and food security. A full understanding of these processes and the development of mitigating strategies to reduce the threats from emerging and existing disease will require input and engagements from people with a diverse set of skills and a range of disciplines.

Given the breadth and enormity of biosecurity risk management, everyone has a role to play in managing biosecurity risks. With the cattle industry in mind, CCA's biosecurity policy recognises a whole of supply chain approach is required for a well-functioning biosecurity system.

The concept of shared responsibility assumes a base level of understanding of biosecurity risks which is why CCA believes the Strategy needs to incorporate an education and extension program to improve preparedness to mitigate risks, readiness to respond to challenges and compliance with legislative requirements. The Strategy needs to clearly define what shared responsibility means for Australians and develop a brand that educates, motivates, and supports everyone to participate in biosecurity.

### ***Partnerships***

Australia is encumbered by a federated system of government that often places agriculture at a disadvantage when compared with many overseas competitors. Improving our competitiveness will require ongoing co-operation between Australia's many governments to effect positive change.

It is expected that the Federal Government has responsibility for pre-border and border activities, with states and territories managing the majority of post border biosecurity. It is the intersect between the federal and state governments that the system becomes fragmented and responsibilities between jurisdictions less defined.

Government responsibilities for food and other agricultural products are spread across several Australian and state and territory government ministers, departments, and portfolios. This presents challenges for governments in the regulation of traceability systems to ensure they are coordinated, cost effective and cover all aspects of the supply chain appropriately.

Individual property identification is a case in point. Jurisdictional disparity in the rules that apply to applications for, and implementation of, property identification codes (PICs) for livestock industries has long been contentious as is the apparent on again/off again approach to this issue and reform of the National Traceability Framework.

As an underlying principle, the cost of any additional administration must be outweighed by the potential benefits in biosecurity any proposed changes will bring, including the introduction of national consistency for producers who own properties across multiple jurisdictions.

As a national representative body, CCA continues to press for national consistency across a wide range of state and territory legislation and regulations that affect industry. There is a significant contribution from industry to be made and operational activities need to involve both government and industry working together in implementation of biosecurity activities.

## **Investment**

CCA welcomed the \$371 million boost to the Australian biosecurity system. This investment will help secure the safety and prosperity of our agricultural industries, environment, and the wider community. CCA, along with other peak industry councils, has and continues to advocate for additional funding to support and enhance Australia's robust biosecurity system. Australia's unique pest and disease-free status underpins the profits and productivity of the beef industry, and Australian beef's reputation as a premium product.

### ***Do our funding and investment models support our system's needs?***

The concept of a sustainable funding model for biosecurity has been raised in review after review for over a decade<sup>4</sup>. The failure to implement the Onshore Biosecurity Levy is indicative of the complexity of implementing increasing funding; however, a successful biosecurity system requires sustained levels of well targeted investment independent of election cycles and political agendas. It should be underpinned by funding principles and arrangements that are nationally coordinated, consistently applied and well communicated.

The development of a new National Biosecurity Strategy needs to consider new mechanisms of sustainable long-term funding and improved cost recovery linked to activities that create biosecurity risk.

### ***Technology, Data and Analytics***

Information is a critical biosecurity system asset. The Strategy should support timely access to quality information for evidence-based risk assessment and management. National collaboration on data and intelligence sharing, including interoperable systems and agreed data sharing protocols will strengthen system performance in managing biosecurity risk. CCA's biosecurity policy supports system connectivity and is inherently linked with our integrity systems policy.

Traceability remains fundamental to accessing and maintaining domestic and international markets and is a critical component of Australia's biosecurity system. Ongoing trade liberalisation is translating to increased competition meaning any breakdown in the system compromises the entire red meat sector, not just those in a particular supply chain or commodity group. Subsequently this results in our trading partners losing confidence in our product and loss of market access. It is therefore imperative that Australia's traceability system ensures all species meet the National Livestock Traceability Performance Standards and incorporates new and sustainable technology that coordinates data collection, access, and database maintenance.

CCA looks forward to further consultation with Department on this important body of work. If there are any queries about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact our office on 1300 653 038 or email [cca@cattlecouncil.com.au](mailto:cca@cattlecouncil.com.au).

Yours sincerely

Travis Tobin  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>4</sup> *Inspector-General of Biosecurity 2021, Adequacy of department's operational model to effectively mitigate biosecurity risks in evolving risk and business environments*, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, February. CC BY 4.0.