

# REPORT

File: CL012

Report No.: 2003/663

Prepared for: Policy Committee

Prepared by: Selva Selvarajah, Director Resource Management

Date: 7 October, 2003

**Subject: The Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand**

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## 1. Précis

Early this year the Council submitted on the Draft Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand. The key point of the submission was to require a single agency to be responsible for all biosecurity matters in the country.

The Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand was released in August 2003. The aim of this report is to assess "The Strategy" against our submission and its potential effectiveness.

"The Strategy" has included most submission points including the need for a single leading agency. "The Strategy" recommends the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) as the leading agency because of its biosecurity expertise and existing infrastructure. "The Strategy" requires the leading agency to be responsible for all biosecurity matters and to co-ordinate activities between agencies. The preferred structure is a ministry (e.g. Biosecurity) to be fully responsible for all national biosecurity matters rather than resorting to co-ordination of other ministries and agencies, the "one ministry" or "one agency" approach. In light of lengthy structural or legislative changes the proposed framework could be accepted as an interim measure, which would be monitored for its effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes. If the proposed framework is not effective, the "one ministry" or "one agency" option could be pursued.

## 2. Background

In late November 2001, the Council commented on a Biosecurity Strategy Issues Paper. In December 2002 the Biosecurity Council released "Guarding Pacific's Triple Star, a Draft Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand". In January 2003 the Council submitted on the draft strategy. The key submission point was to require a single agency to be responsible for all biosecurity matters in the country.

In August 2003 the Biosecurity Council released "Protect New Zealand, the Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand". The aim of this paper is to assess "The Strategy" against our submissions and the effectiveness of "The Strategy" in achieving the desired outcomes.

## 3. The Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand and our submissions

### 3.1 Title

The Draft Biosecurity Strategy was referred to as "Guarding Pacific's Triple Star, a Draft Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand". Our submission commented that such a title did not capture the essence of biosecurity for New Zealand. The new title of "Protect New

Zealand - Biosecurity of New Zealand” reflects the importance and urgency of addressing the issue.

### ***3.2 Single Agency***

Council’s submission requested a single agency for the management of biosecurity in New Zealand. “The Strategy” recognises fully the need for a single leading agency to effectively manage national biosecurity issues. It proposes MAF take the leading agency role by co-ordinating activities between the Department of Conservation (DOC), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) and regional councils. The strategy makes MAF clearly accountable for overall management of the whole biosecurity system.

While all agencies such as DOC, MOH and MFish are responsible to the Minister of Biosecurity, the preferred option is for one agency that manages all national biosecurity matters. There may be legislative and major structural changes required to achieve this. In the meantime the proposed one lead agency and its co-ordination role could be the best available option under the circumstances.

The proposed structure and governance require ongoing monitoring to ensure effective management of national biosecurity matters. “The Strategy” proposes:

- a) providing the MAF Chief Executive with greater end to end (pre border to post border management) responsibility for managing the overall biosecurity system;
- b) convening a ministerial committee and a forum of chief executives from relevant ministries to take strategic direction and monitor performance;
- c) establishing mechanisms such as the Biosecurity Council and central/regional government forum as ministerial advisory groups.

“The Strategy” admits that the above initiatives would take time and in the medium term the Deputy Chief Executive of MAF would develop the structure and programmes. The Chief Executive of MAF may take an immediate leadership role. The accountabilities would not be transferred until the structure and programmes are in place and funding arrangements are completed.

This period of restructuring and funding planning is crucial and hence our Council should be involved actively in promoting the best outcome. It is suggested that the Chief Executive of our Council provide active liaison and advice to the Deputy Chief Executive of MAF during the short to medium term of structure and programme development and funding allocation. In the long term we should monitor the effectiveness of the new structure and effect changes by lobbying if the desired outcomes are not achieved.

### ***3.3 Crown responsibility for pest management***

“The Strategy” accepts that the Crown has a responsibility to manage pests on Crown land and promises that this issue will be dealt with by “The Strategy”. This issue was raised in our submission.

### ***3.4 Capability of funding***

Our submission requested that the single agency manage government resources and funding, without wholesale transfer of funding responsibilities to regional councils.

“The Strategy” states that the government has directed MAF to review existing funding arrangements over the next 18 months. An increase in levies and user charges is expected, along with increased tax funding. The system will also ensure greater consistency in funding within different biosecurity functions.

### ***3.5 Decision-making and priorities***

Council’s submission wanted a transparent decision-making process and immediate cost effective action without further delay.

“The Strategy” promises that it would include a risk management process (this includes improving marine biosecurity capability, increased public awareness, better management of imported sea containers) and improved systems and processes (this includes performance measurement system, data management, and improved management practices).

## **4. Conclusion**

Overall, “The Strategy” has taken Council's submissions into consideration.

With time the effectiveness of the proposed structure and governance arrangements against the preferred arrangements will be apparent.

In the meantime Council needs to be involved in liaison and lobbying to achieve the desired process and outcomes. Of particular interest will be how regional councils will be involved in decision making relevant to their interests and responsibilities.

## **5. Recommendation**

The Committee note this report and agree that Council staff participate in developing the implementation of the Biosecurity Strategy.

Selva Selvarajah  
**Director Resource Management**