

15 January 2019

Dr Sarah Bruce
A/g Assistant Secretary
Plant Import Operations
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box 858, Canberra, ACT 2601

**Letter of Support for the Victorian Farmers Federation Imported Cut Flower
Biosecurity Concerns**

Dear Sarah,

Cotton Australia is the key representative body for Australia's cotton growing industry supporting more than 1200 cotton producers. The cotton industry is an integral part of the Australian economy, worth more than \$2 billion per-annum in export earnings and helping to underpin more than 50 rural communities.

Cotton Australia holds the official role for biosecurity stewardship in the Australian cotton industry, and works with the Australian government to manage this national priority through its membership of Plant Health Australia. Cotton Australia recognises the need for the cotton industry to work with the federal, state and territory governments to help reduce the potential for incursions of emergency plant pests that could adversely impact on production, domestic and international trade and the regional economy and environment. The cotton industry is committed to ensuring effective responses to pest incursions are possible to minimise costs.

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) have raised concerns regarding the level of interception of live insects on imported cut flower and foliage products. Additionally, there are also concerns regarding the policy of allowing insect pests into the country that are already established here.

Cotton Australia shares these concerns with the VFF. A number of pests that are imported on cut flowers and foliage are also insect pests of cotton, including mites, thrips and aphid.

A key biosecurity risk is the potential importation of exotic strains of established pests. For example, the two-spotted spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*) is an established pest in Australia, but there are a number of exotic spider mite strains (*Tetranychus turkestanii*, *T. pacificus*, *T. cinnabarinus*) that may not respond to chemical control in the same way. Exotic strains may also display different levels of crop damage and may attack different crops.

The import of established pests carrying resistance to one or more of the current chemical control options available in Australia is also a key biosecurity risk for the cotton industry.

The Australian cotton industry has a strong stewardship approach to pest management, incorporating principles of integrated pest management (IPM) and resistance management which has seen pesticide use dramatically reduced along with the use of more selective options when pest control is necessary.



Advancing Australian Cotton

The result of resistant pests and/or exotic strains entering our production system would negate the substantial environmental and financial benefits the industry has derived from adapting better, more environmentally responsible, chemical use practices.

Cotton Australia views biosecurity as a key priority for the industry and would welcome an opportunity to provide further information on its position. For more information, contact Sally Ceeney, Research Direction and Stewardship Policy Officer, sallyc@cotton.org.au 0459 189 771

Yours sincerely,

Sally Ceeney
Research Direction and Stewardship Policy Officer

Cotton Australia