

Proposed Code of Practice for the management and control of Panama disease tropical race 4 in Queensland

Q. Why is this Code being developed?

A. [A discussion paper about the Panama TR4 Program's transition to industry management](#) was presented to growers in early 2022. Both the ABGC and the Queensland Government, as part of an industry transition process, proposed that a Code of Practice would provide the most practical and flexible model to deal with the control and management of TR4 in the future. Industry feedback from this paper, showed that growers supported an industry Code of Practice as part of the framework for managing Panama TR4 after 30 June 2023. The ABGC sees this, in association with the provisions provided under the Act, as an important first step in empowering banana growers to take responsibility of their own biosecurity futures.

Q. Is Panama TR4 so serious that it requires action?

A. Yes. Panama TR4 is one of the greatest threats to worldwide banana production. Once established on a property, spores can survive in the soil for decades. There is no current cure for TR4. In some countries, TR4 has had a devastating impact on industries and livelihoods. If not effectively managed, it has the potential to do the same in Queensland. For more information on Panama TR4 visit here - [About — Panama TR4 Protect](#)

Q. Who is this Code intended to apply to?

A. The Code is intended to apply to all commercial banana growers in Queensland however it can also be used as a resource for growers outside Queensland. This is because the Code represents best practice biosecurity protection for commercial banana growers anywhere in Australia for the management and control of TR4.

Q. How was this Code developed?


A. The Code was initially developed in consideration of the successful approaches being employed by the Queensland Government in limiting the spread of Panama TR4. A review of all current tactics and possible options to build on those was undertaken by the ABGC with the assistance of a specialised and experienced biosecurity consulting company to develop a preliminary draft of the Code.

The preliminary Code was then reviewed by a project reference group which included representatives of ABGC, biosecurity agencies from both the Queensland and New South Wales governments, an infested property owner, a grower in close proximity to an infested property, and another grower not in close proximity to an infested property.

Feedback from the reference group has resulted in amendments to the preliminary Code to produce this draft Code for wider stakeholder consultation.

Q. How is a Code different to other legislative tools like requirements written within an Act or regulation?

A. Generally, a Code contains technical detail that is inappropriate for inclusion within an Act or a Regulation. For example, the proposed Code will include details about the use of



different chemicals to destroy plants, including detail on how much to use and where it must be used on a plant.

The Code itself does not create offences if you fail to comply with its provisions, but the *Biosecurity Act 2014* deems a breach of a mandatory Code provision a breach of your general biosecurity obligation.

Q Does this Code create new obligations on my business?

A. Under Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014*, a person already has an obligation (a general biosecurity obligation) to:

- take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise each biosecurity risk
- minimise the likelihood of causing a 'biosecurity event', and limit the consequences if such an event is caused
- prevent or minimise the harmful effects a risk could have, and not do anything that might make any harmful effects worse.

The proposed Code, when completed, will be considered best practice and growers can follow the Code or do something better to demonstrate that they've met their general biosecurity obligation for TR4.

For more information about the general biosecurity obligation visit here - <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/policy-legislation-regulation/biosecurity-act-2014/general-biosecurity-obligation>

Q, Can the Code change or be updated to reflect changes in disease spread or the outcomes of scientific research?

A. Yes. The proposed Code can be reviewed annually and every 5 years to ensure it remains relevant and is achieving its objectives. The Code is not intended to be written in stone, rather it is to be a living document and will, where necessary, be amended to reflect scientific advances in TR4 management as well as government and industry policy changes on TR4 generally. The review process presents as an opportunity for you to propose changes to the Code and any amendments proposed for the Code will be subject to industry consultation.


Q. How will a Code be enforced in my situation?


A. Codes are generally enforced in accordance with a Program compliance plan. The proposed Code assists growers in minimising the chance of having to deal with the substantial impact that TR4 would have on them should TR4 be introduced into their property. For infested property owners, the procedures will assist in minimising spread within their farm and from their farm.

The intent is to encourage voluntary compliance in following the Code's steps and assist a person through education and training materials and support activities

Q. Will this proposed Code be another regulation I have to comply with?

A. No, the proposed Code will not add any additional regulatory burden on you. The Code will replace what currently exists in Queensland's Biosecurity Manual and the processes and procedures attached to a Destruction Notice issued under section 58 of the *Biosecurity Regulation 2016*. In fact, the Code would remove many of the current reporting requirements imposed on growers after the issuing of a Destruction Notice. The Code will outline measures you should take to assist you in meeting your general biosecurity obligation under





the *Biosecurity Act 2014* relating to managing TR4. Those simple measures include zoning your land and sanitary and phytosanitary procedures.

Q. Is this proposed Code just going to add more information on the internet about best practice farm management and addressing the risks associated with TR4?

A. No. As the proposed Code incorporates best practice farm management principles in addition to specific TR4 treatment measures, it should replace much of the existing information on the internet. Whilst the proposed Code will be like a one-stop-shop on information about managing TR4, it leaves open the possibility of ongoing support through other sources. For example, the Code could be supported by factsheets on peripheral matters including TR4 and mixed farming operations, design layout for decontamination facilities, templates and signage. Information and advice about Panama TR4 is currently being migrated from Queensland Government pages to panamatr4protect.com.au which is owned by the ABGC and operated by the Panama TR4 Program. All information on this site is the most current resources available to growers.

Q. Is this Code just about TR4 or can the measures apply to other pests and diseases affecting bananas?

A. This proposed Code deals specifically with the management of TR4. However, the Code includes provisions on best practice on-farm biosecurity measures that are relevant to pest and disease management in bananas generally. These measures, include zoning and sanitary and phytosanitary procedures can assist in ensuring your farm is biosecure.

Q. What's in the Code?

A. The Code is made of 3 sections:

- Chapter 1 is explanatory notes such as where the Code applies, when it applies, particular terms, effect and purposes of the Code.
- Chapter 2 is voluntary measures that a grower should follow to discharge their general biosecurity obligation, including:
 - ✓ zoning
 - ✓ controlling movements and waste management throughout the farm
 - ✓ hygiene and decontamination
 - ✓ biosecurity training for employees and contractors
 - ✓ earthworks and weed control
 - ✓ inspection of plants and reporting presence of disease
 - ✓ record keeping

These measures become mandatory once a property is confirmed to have TR4.

- Chapter 3 applies only to infested properties and are mandatory to replace the current 'Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4', including:
 - ✓ destruction of infected plants and those around it
 - ✓ fencing and signage around destruction zone
 - ✓ maintenance of the destruction zone
 - ✓ decontamination procedures
 - ✓ waste disposal of material from destruction zone
 - ✓ record keeping



Q. What happens if I don't comply with Chapter 2 of the Code if adopted by government?

A. The *Biosecurity Act 2014* provides that if a person acts inconsistently or contravenes a Code provision made under a Regulation and does not follow an equivalent or better way than that under the Code, the person will be taken not to have discharged his or her General Biosecurity Obligation ("GBO") under the Act. You may face significant penalties for a breach of your GBO.

Q. What happens if I don't comply with a mandatory provision of the Code in Chapter 3 if adopted by government?

A. The *Biosecurity Act 2014* deems a person who does not comply with a mandatory provision as failing to discharge their General Biosecurity Obligation under the Act. Significant penalties apply for failing to discharge a GBO.

Q. How will the Code change the way TR4 is managed?

A. It won't. The Code is purely focused on grower obligations, capturing all proven processes and procedures that have been effective in controlling TR4 and minimising the spread of the disease.

Q. How will growers benefit from the Code?

A. The proposed Code will:

- be proactive in future proofing the industry against major TR4 outbreaks rather than the current reactive situation of implementing requirements once the disease is discovered
- encourage growers to manage future risks to banana crops posed by other pests and diseases
- improve growers' knowledge of best practice management principles through one source of information
- enhance growers' ability to discharge their general biosecurity obligation under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*

Do you have a question that needs answering?

Contact Geoff Wilson on 0418 644 068 or email geoff@abgc.org.au.