



June 2026

Webinar: Assessment of alternative measures for bananas from the Philippines – BIRA, issues paper and trip report

Questions and Answers

1. Once the expert advisory group is formed, will details of who is a member be publicly available?

- We recognise that banana-specific expert advice may be required for this assessment. To support this, we are establishing an Expert Advisory Group (EAG). The EAG will be made up of experts in:
 - banana pests and diseases
 - production practices
 - pest management systems.
- We may ask the EAG at any stage of the process to provide independent, expert advice on this assessment.
- We have commenced the process to establish the EAG. We are committed to having members appointed by quarter 3, 2026.
- We will not publicly release the names of EAG members for privacy reasons and to maintain their independence.

2. In the BIRA are you looking at biosecurity risks/issues beyond banana pests and diseases?

- The assessment is limited to considering the biosecurity risks that may be associated with the pathway. The pathway is commercially produced fresh Cavendish banana fruit from the Philippines.
- There are organisms not directly associated with the pathway, but that may potentially arrive with imported banana fruit. These will be addressed by Australia's on-arrival verification processes and management if required.
- These organisms may include:
 - pests considered not to be associated with the fruit pathway
 - pests of other crops
 - predators and parasitoids of arthropods.
- The department considers these organisms to be contaminating pests ('contaminants' or 'hitchhikers'). These pests could pose sanitary (to human or animal life or health) or phytosanitary (to plant life or health) risks.

- These risks are identified and addressed using existing operational procedures. This includes requiring an inspection of all consignments during processing and preparation for export. Consignments will also undergo a verification process on arrival in Australia. The department will investigate whether any pest identified through import verification processes may be of biosecurity concern to Australia. If so, remedial action may be required.

3. Can we have at least 30-days' notice before the department releases the draft report so we can be appropriately prepared?

- We expect to release the draft report for a minimum 60-calendar day public consultation period. We expect to do this in early 2027, noting this timing is subject to change. We will keep stakeholders informed of any changes to this proposed timing.
- We will provide stakeholders with as much notice as possible ahead of the expected release date.
- We will advise of the proposed release date on our webpage. We will also notify the Australian Banana Growers' Council and email subscribers to our banana newsletter. If you would like to receive this newsletter, please contact plantstakeholders@aff.gov.au

4. What is the expectation for stakeholder input on the issues paper?

- We welcome feedback on any aspects of the issues paper. We also invite stakeholders to provide any relevant information. We will consider this when preparing the draft report.
- Please provide any feedback to plantstakeholders@aff.gov.au by 16 July 2026. We will carefully consider all feedback when preparing the draft report.
- We acknowledge the issues paper doesn't include a lot of technical detail and so stakeholders may not have feedback to provide at this stage. The technical detail will be provided in the draft report. We expect to release the draft report for public consultation in early 2027 (timing subject to change).

5. Does this assessment consider the Australian state and territory biosecurity regulations for bananas?

- We are aware of the regulations applied by Australian state and territory governments. This includes for specific banana pests and diseases on the movement of banana fruit between jurisdictions.
- It is important to note that we cannot apply measures for pests on imported goods that are more stringent than what is applied domestically for the same pests if they are under official control in Australia. When proposing measures to manage pests or diseases on imported fresh Philippine bananas, we will consider any control measures that may apply for that specific pest or disease domestically, if they are technically justified.
- 'Official control' applies when the Commonwealth officially recognises measures that a state or territory government puts in place to contain and control a specific pest or disease within their jurisdiction. These mandatory activities include:

- containment or suppression activities (mostly involves destruction, disposal and decontamination)
- surveillance in the area where the pest or disease could establish
- movement restrictions so the pest or disease does not spread to an area that is not affected.

6. Panama disease Tropical Race 4 and banana bunchy top are significant diseases of concern to the Australian banana industry. Can the department raise the importance of how it is considering these diseases in the assessment?

- We understand Panama disease Tropical Race 4 and banana bunchy top are of significant concern to the Australian banana industry.
- As part of our assessment, we are reviewing the 2008 import risk analysis. This is to ensure the assessments of all pests and diseases identified on the pathway are still appropriate. This includes Panama disease Tropical Race 4 and banana bunchy top. We are also determining if any new biosecurity risks have emerged since 2008.
- This information will be captured in the draft report. We expect to release the draft report for public consultation in early 2027 (timing subject to change).

7. If trade commenced, how would non-compliance be monitored?

- If trade were to commence, every consignment would be subject to inspection before it leaves the Philippines and at the Australian border. These inspections are to verify compliance with import conditions. They also confirm freedom from pests and diseases of biosecurity concern. Goods arriving in Australia that do not meet Australia's import conditions will be managed, exported, or destroyed.
- If non-compliance against any mandatory risk management measures occurs, we reserve the right to suspend imports and audit the system. Imports would only start again when we are satisfied that appropriate corrective action has been taken.

8. Why is the department reviewing the whole 2008 import risk analysis if the Philippines only requested alternative measures for 3 pathogens?

- The Philippines have only requested Australia consider alternative measures to manage the 3 main pathogens of concern identified in the 2008 Philippine bananas import risk analysis. These are Moko, black Sigatoka and banana freckle.
- However, given the time since the import risk analysis was finalised in 2008, we will also review the whole 2008 import risk analysis to ensure the assessments of other pests are still appropriate and determine whether any new biosecurity risks have emerged. We will make sure that any such risks are considered and managed appropriately, if needed.

9. Why can't Australia refuse the Philippines request and put a stop to the process?

- We must consider the Philippines' request for alternative measures. This is due to Australia's international obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization.
- International trade rules support Australia's position as a major global exporter of agricultural goods. It is important that we respond to this request within the accepted international trade framework. This helps to reinforce that we are a trustworthy partner in international trade. In the same way, other countries are obliged to respond to Australia's market access requests.
- Where possible, we must develop import conditions that:
 - achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP)
 - are scientifically justified
 - do not unreasonably restrict trade.
- In 2002, the Philippines lodged a trade dispute with the WTO ([DS270](#)). The dispute focussed on measures affecting horticultural imports to Australia, including bananas. The case remains dormant, but the Philippines can request recommencement at any time. If this happens, a panel could convene within 10 days.
- Importantly, we won't compromise on biosecurity to allow trade.

10. Who is behind this application?

- We conduct risk analyses in response to a market access request from a trading partner. The relevant government authority of another country can make a market access request. Australian stakeholders can also make a request.
- This assessment is in response to a market access request from the Philippines. Their relevant government authority is the Bureau of Plant Industry. The Philippines first submitted the market access request in 1995. Cavendish bananas remain the Philippines' top priority for horticultural market access to Australia.

11. What are the alternative measures the Philippines have asked Australia to consider?

- The Philippines requested Australia consider alternative measures to those proposed in the 2008 import risk analysis. The Philippines has not provided specific details on proposed alternative measures. It has requested that we consider its commercial production practices as part of these measures.
- We are working with the Philippines to thoroughly understand its commercial production practices. This is to inform our assessment.
- Our assessment will determine if the commercial production practices manage the biosecurity risks. The risks must achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP). If not, we will determine if there are additional measures that would reduce the risk to achieve ALOP.
- As part of the assessment, departmental officers visited the Philippines. The visit allowed us to see their banana growing practices first-hand. This gave us a better understanding

of the risks and controls. It also informed us of the feasibility of potential risk management measures.

- After completing the assessment, we will release a draft report for public consultation. At that stage, stakeholders can provide feedback on any proposed alternative measures.

12. Will imported bananas have to meet the same WH&S and modern slavery standards that Australian growers are required to meet?

- Considerations of the following are outside the scope of this biosecurity assessment:
 - modern slavery
 - ethical employment
 - occupational health and safety (OH&S)
 - environmental standards.
- The Philippines and Australia are both members of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). As members, both countries are obligated to uphold the ILO commitments. These are outlined in the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up (1998). These commitments include overseeing fair and responsible employment practices. They also include ensuring a safe and healthy working environment across all industries in their countries.
- The Australian Government is committed to ensuring the supply chains we use do not promote, condone or financially support modern slavery. This commitment is supported by various laws, policies and international agreements. This includes the Modern Slavery Act 2018.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for matters relating to labour and workplace practices in the context of trade.

13. Why has the 2018 request from the Philippines taken until last year to be significantly escalated?

- In 2018, the Philippines formally requested Australia consider alternative measures. This is for 3 main pathogens of concern (Moko, black Sigatoka and banana freckle).
- In March 2025, the Philippines requested Australia consider access for an additional cultivar. This is 'GCTCV-218 which is also known as 'Formosana'. The Philippines also requested an additional export province. This is Davao de Oro in the Davao Region or Region 11.
- Since 2018, we have been conducting a preliminary review of the request to inform our assessment.
- We are now progressing the assessment. After completing the assessment, we will release a draft report for public consultation.

More information

Web: agriculture.gov.au/banana-Philippines

Email: plantstakeholders@aff.gov.au