



AgForce Queensland Farmers Limited

ABN 57 611 736 700

Tenth Floor, 200 Mary St, Brisbane, Qld, 4000
PO Box 13186, North Bank Plaza, cnr Ann & George St, Brisbane Qld 4003

Ph: (07) 3236 3100 | Fax: (07) 3236 3077 | Email: agforce@agforceqld.org.au
Web: www.agforceqld.org.au

26 June 2026

Biosecurity Strategy and Reform Division
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Agriculture House
70 Northbourne Avenue
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: biosecurityreform@aff.gov.au

Good afternoon,

Re: National Biosecurity Reforms

AgForce Queensland Farmers Limited (AgForce) is a peak organisation representing Queensland's cane, cattle, grain and sheep, wool & goat producers. The cane, beef, broadacre cropping and sheep, wool & goat industries in Queensland generated around \$11.2 billion in on-farm value of production in 2022-23. AgForce's purpose is to advance sustainable agribusiness and strives to ensure the long-term growth, viability, competitiveness and profitability of these industries. Over 6,000 farmers, individuals and businesses provide support to AgForce through membership. Our members own and manage around 55 million hectares, or a third of the state's land area. Queensland producers provide high-quality food and fibre to Australian and overseas consumers, contribute significantly to the social fabric of regional, rural and remote communities, as well as deliver stewardship of the state's natural environment.

AgForce welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the proposed National Biosecurity Reforms. A strong national biosecurity system is critical to maintaining a resilient and productive agricultural industry and any proposed reform should be made with the goal of building this resilience and fostering a strong industry.

AgForce recognises the intent of the National Biosecurity Reform Agenda to improve operations and respond to growing pressures associated with increasing risk, changing environmental conditions and constraints with funding. However, whilst the discussion paper touches on many of the right areas, the reforms appear weighted toward strategy development, governance and framework planning, with incomplete detail around funding, and implementation.

AgForce believes the success of these reforms will ultimately depend on whether they deliver measurable improvements in preparedness, response capability, operational effectiveness and provide certainty with funding.

Key Recommendations

- Review national biosecurity funding arrangements to expand and provide certainty of funding for biosecurity, without increasing producer contributions.
- Invest in Sentinel herd monitoring improvements and establish sentinel bird traps to help with early detection of animal disease outbreaks.

- Develop nationally consistent and practical traceability systems, including implementation of a national traceability system for plant products and continued improvement of livestock traceability arrangements with clear governance arrangements ensuring producer ownership of their data.
- Improve coordination between state, territory and federal governments through practical operational integration, joint exercises and effective data sharing arrangements that prioritise usability over centralised administration.
- Establish formal national biosecurity recovery arrangements supported by dedicated funding and integrated early into emergency response planning to support restoration of productive capacity and market access.
- Prioritise workforce delivery over additional strategy development, with investment focused on regional workforce attraction, vocational pathways, training uptake and retention of experienced personnel.

Preparedness

The National Biosecurity Reforms proposed an increase in preparedness capability across jurisdictions, with the development of a national biosecurity threat assessment process and national surveillance data sharing agreements, alongside the continued upgrading of the national livestock traceability database for cattle and small ruminant stock.

Over the long term, a farm preparedness program has also been proposed alongside a national traceability system for plant products.

AgForce believes that preparedness represents the greatest opportunity to reduce future response and recovery costs and is supportive in principle of the proposals in this area.

Key to this should be upgrades to sentinel units including herds in North Queensland and the establishment of sentinel bird traps. Improvements in this area are key to detecting early incursions and increasing the likelihood of elimination.

Additionally, AgForce supports the widespread delivery of producer and supply chain animal disease preparedness workshops. Funding for these workshops will help ensure that the industry is prepared to respond to potential outbreaks.

The establishment and maintenance of washdown facilities on stock routes is another important preparedness measure. Investment in strategically located washdown infrastructure will assist in reducing disease transmission risks associated with livestock movements and support effective biosecurity controls during both routine operations and emergency response situations.

The proposed national biosecurity threat assessment process and long term on farm preparedness programs require careful design. Preparedness should build upon existing farm biosecurity practices and avoid creating accreditation or compliance requirements that duplicate current industry programs.

The proposal to expand data sharing and strengthen livestock traceability has the potential to decrease response time to biosecurity incursions. However, successful implementation will depend on clear governance arrangements around ownership and protection of producer data. Traceability systems



should remain practical and demonstrate clear biosecurity outcomes before additional obligations are imposed.

The national livestock traceability database is an area where several key improvements could be made including the adoption of UHF technology with eID tags and the potential to transfer tags between species code.

AgForce is supportive of the development of a national traceability system for plant products, which has been outlined as a long term reform. This will require government investment in a framework that producers can easily adhere to and does not impose a compliance burden.

Response

The response reforms include an update to environmental and plant response policy alongside plans to address issues of emergency response arrangements and to contain and manage the impact when dealing with emergency biosecurity threats.

AgForce supports the proposals in this area to address longstanding limitations within Australia's emergency biosecurity response and update the processes in place to support an emergency response. The proposal to develop formal containment and impact management plans is also supported.

These proposals, however, must be supported by sufficient funding and staffing resources.

Recovery

Biosecurity plans and policy have typically centred on preparedness and emergency response, with recovery measures to biosecurity responses often lacking structure and set funding.

AgForce supports establishing formal recovery arrangements with budgeted funding.

Effective recovery should focus on restoring productive capacity of areas impacted by incursions and aim to support market re-entry and reducing economic impacts on the affected communities or industry.

Recovery extends beyond direct financial support and should include restoring market access, rebuilding confidence and recognising the broader impacts on regional communities and supply chains.

A key component of recovery for producers impacted by an outbreak will be rebuilding lost traits back into herds.

Recovery planning should commence alongside response activities rather than after response concludes to improve coordination, support earlier decision-making and enable a smoother transition from response to restoration.

Workforce

The proposal to forecast workforce demand is supported by AgForce but as there is already several workforce strategies developed by government, AgForce does not support the development of another strategy in this area.



Measures to increase regional workforce attraction, vocational pathways and retain experienced personnel should be directly supported by the government. With priority given to increasing uptake of training in relevant fields and improving conditions in areas with high demand for work.

Operational Capability and Capacity

AgForce supports better coordination between state and territory governments and the federal government. This should be done by more practical integration of operations, with joint exercises and training.

Improved data sharing is also necessary, however measures to coordinate should not be bureaucratic with reforms focusing on practical access and data use rather than centralised collection.

Research priorities should also be linked to producer outcomes combating invasive weeds and pests.

Legislation and Regulation

Addressing legislative and regulatory inconsistencies is a priority for AgForce with reform strongly needed in this area. Differences between state and federal requirements create unnecessary compliance burdens, increase costs and complicate approaches to biosecurity.

AgForce supports harmonisation where outcomes can be achieved more efficiently through national consistency, with success measured through reduced duplication, improved clarity and lower compliance costs.

Areas where improved consistency would deliver benefits include livestock traceability requirements and implementation across jurisdictions and greater alignment of legislative definitions and control obligations for invasive species

Variability in approaches to restricted and prohibited species, movement restrictions and management responsibilities can create uncertainty for producers operating across borders and reduce the effectiveness of coordinated action.

Funding

Funding is the central issue underpinning all other proposed reforms.

The discussion paper appropriately recognises that existing funding arrangements are under pressure; however, it provides limited detail regarding how future costs will be allocated.

AgForce supports reviewing funding arrangements but does not support the transfer of increasing responsibility to producers.

It is AgForce's position that funding should be increased to limit risk and where levied separately, correspond to risk, with a container levy or corresponding charge to imports the most appropriate additional avenue for raising direct revenue for biosecurity.

Conclusion

In Summary, AgForce recognises the intent of the National Biosecurity Reform Agenda to strengthen Australia's biosecurity system in response to increasing risks and funding pressures. While the discussion paper identifies many of the right priorities, it places greater emphasis on strategy and



governance than on funding and implementation. The success of the reforms will depend on delivering practical improvements supported by sustainable funding.

AgForce appreciates the opportunity give to provide feedback on the National Biosecurity Reforms and welcomes continued engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

If you have any questions or require further information please contact Alexander Desses, Sheep, Wool and Goats Policy Director by email dessesa@agforceqld.org.au or via phone at 0428 889 052.

Sincerely,

Niki Ford
Chief Executive Officer
AgForce Queensland

