

**18 January 2011.**

### **Senate inquiry into biosecurity and quarantine.**

Australian Prawn Farms have been operational since the 1980's and are considered to be an emerging industry in comparison to other agriculture or fishing sectors. They provide a valuable source of food for the Australian economy and are grown in compliance with strict environmental laws imposed by various levels of government.

According to the Queensland Government Report to Farmers Aquaculture production survey Queensland 2008-09 [http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/Fisheries\\_Aquaculture/Report-to-farmers-2008-09.pdf](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/Fisheries_Aquaculture/Report-to-farmers-2008-09.pdf) the Australian Prawn Farmers has 22 producing farms capable of producing in excess of 5000 tonnes per annum. The value of this sector is estimated to be \$85 million nationally and employs 319 FTEs.

For years the Australian Prawn farmers Association (APFA) has lobbied the Federal Government and Biosecurity to strengthen the Import Risk Analysis for imported prawns because of concerns of diseases and viruses that imported prawns can contain, that have the potential to decimate the Australian aquaculture and wild caught prawn industries.

Research has been successful in domesticating prawns, thereby reducing the need for collecting brood stock from the wild however some farms still require wild brood stock for their annual harvest season.

Recently the APFA's gravest fears were realised <http://www.daff.gov.au/about/publications/interim-inspector-general-of-biosecurity> with the release last year of two containers of imported prawns that had tested positive for WSSV (White Spot Syndrome Virus) a disease reportable to the World Health Organisation – OIE [http://www.oie.int/eng/maladies/en\\_classification2011.htm?e1d7](http://www.oie.int/eng/maladies/en_classification2011.htm?e1d7).

These releases were found to be because of human error and in Stage 2 of the review the Interim Inspector General of Biosecurity stated “**under existing clearing arrangements, a similar error could occur again**” this is of little comfort to our industry.

Stage 2 of the review assessed the likelihood of the infected prawns that were not recalled being able to enter high-risk pathways into Australia. The review found that the likelihood was **negligible** and **extremely low**. The review did not state how much of the 20 tonne shipment was able to be recalled only that it was distributed to at least 19 commercial wholesalers/distributors. The Interim Inspector General of Biosecurity assumed that the non recalled quantities would be quickly consumed.

Recent weather events here in Queensland, that have been shown all around Australia, and across the world, have touched the hearts of many. Among the images that I can clearly recall are supermarkets, Coles in particular, being totally submerged and all produce contained therein being washed into the flowing mess to eventually end up in Moreton Bay. The flood event was labelled as worse than the 1974 Brisbane floods indicating that these events do and can occur every thirty odd years.

The APFA can only hope that there were no infected imported prawns washed out to sea from this freak occurrence and that the Inspector General is correct with his assessment of negligible and extremely low likelihood of entering our waterways!!!

Never say never as these images show –

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/slideshowajax/140024/queensland-devastated-by-floods.slideshow>





APFA now finds it may be necessary to undertake research to ascertain that we are free from the listed notifiable diseases reportable to the World Health Authority OIE. We should not have to Biosecurity should have tighter testing controls in place to protect Australian industries and maintain our clean and green disease free status.

We don't want another **“human error”** incidence to potentially jeopardise our existence. Our industry has enough to deal with from Mother Nature.

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