

# Media Release



Apple & Pear Australia Ltd.

21 June 2007

## Senate committee supports apple and pear growers' concerns about NZ apples

The apple and pear industry is encouraged by the conclusions of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, which found that the apple and pear industry faces a significant risk that fire blight could compromise the Australian apple and pear industry.

Chairman of the apple and pear industry fire blight task force, Mr John Corboy, said the processes the Senate Standing Committee recommended provides additional checks and balances regarding the importing of apples from New Zealand.

"The Committee concurred with our concerns that accepting a risk that fire blight could enter the country is a high risk strategy that the industry should not be forced to take.

"We were also vindicated regarding our concern about the appeal process, which did not consider additional scientific evidence presented during the appeal process," Mr Corboy said.

The Senate Standing Committee concluded that:

It remains to be convinced that the risk of establishing fire blight after the importation of contaminated fruit is low to very low. The committee shares industry's concern that the scientific evidence does not support the conclusion that the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) is modeled on an acceptable level of risk.

It notes industry's concern that scientific evidence in relation to the establishment and spread of fire blight is limited. No specific scientific evidence was provided to the committee to support a 'low' to 'very low' risk of establishment of the disease.

It is the committee's expectation that, prior to the final approval of the standard operating procedures, the committee will be provided with the draft operating procedures to enable it to consider how the identified risks are to be addressed in practical terms.

It is also the committee's expectation that, prior to the final approval of the standard operating procedures, the committee will be provided with details of the scientific evidence and modeling undertaken as part of the IRA process to determine Biosecurity Australia's stated 'low' to 'very low' risk of establishment of fire blight.

The committee proposes to consider this matter further once it has received the requested material, to satisfy itself whether the operating procedures appropriately address the risks identified. Importation of apples from New Zealand should not commence before the committee has completed its consideration of this matter.

The Chairman of Apple and Pear Australia Ltd, Mr Darral Ashton said pleased that the Senate Standing Committee will review the standard operating procedures before they can be accepted by Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

"The Senate Standing Committee will be an impartial judge of the veracity of the standards by which apples can be imported from New Zealand. We feel confident that they understand the risks associated with importing apples from a known fire blight area," Mr Ashton said.

### Contacts

John Corboy Phone 03 5855 2434 Mobile 0419 575 240	Darral Ashton Phone 02 6949 1654 Mobile 0429 463 781	Stuart Gray, APAL Phone 03 9329 3511 Mobile 0407 816 413
--	--	--