

NFFC Communique

MEETING 27, 29-30 SEPTEMBER 2021

The 27th meeting of the National Fruit Fly Council (the Council) was held on 29th and 30th September 2021. Due to COVID-19 and its ongoing impact on interstate travel, Council members attended virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Fruit Fly Updates

The Council considered updates on current fruit fly issues in Australia, including the South Australia fruit fly outbreak; the Exotic Fruit Flies in the Torres Strait Response Program; and progress being made in current fruit fly research projects.

Council heard that each state is preparing for a season with high insect activity, due to the longer than usual wet season. Early sharing of knowledge amongst governments and industries was considered an important activity for Council and it was agreed that a summary of the discussion should be prepared for stakeholder information.

Fruit Fly Engagement and Extension

The Council noted that the Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment (DAWE) had commissioned Council to deliver a project to strengthen national fruit fly engagement and extension. This body of work is designed to complement the work of the Council while still being flexible enough in its workplan to deliver a range of programs to promote collaborative national work on fruit flies. Areas for engagement include promoting national policy development, raising awareness of fruit fly vulnerabilities, supporting adjustments in on-farm management, and consulting stakeholders on issues such as sustainable funding and sterile insect techniques (SIT).

Webinar Series

The Council has hosted a series of webinars to raise awareness and build understanding across the breadth of fruit fly stakeholders. As of September 2021, seven have been produced with attendance peaking at 150 participants at the most recent webinar on Monday 6th September. A summary of each webinar can be found on the [Prevent Fruit Fly](https://www.preventfruitfly.com.au) website.

Webinars have been interactive, with participants able to ask questions of presenters, allowing for continued stakeholder engagement. To date, over 700 participants have successfully engaged in the series. Noting this success, the Council intends to continue the webinar series over the remainder of 2021 and into 2022. Suggestions for future webinar topics can be submitted to fruitfly@phau.com.au.

SIT Policy Workshops

The Council and DAWE hosted a workshop on Tuesday 21st September 2021 between peak body representatives, industry delegates and state governments to discuss SIT policy.



The workshop talked through the national fruit fly SIT policy, focusing on the potential for preventative use of SIT in fruit fly Pest Free Areas (PFA), and explored the implications and risks of SIT in PFAs for international market access.

This was the start of the discussion; further workshops are being planned for 2021 and early 2022.

Fruit Fly Projects

Population Modelling

The Council welcomed a presentation on the DAWE led project to develop an integrated predictive model to better understand and forecast fruit fly population change, incursion and spread. DAWE has consulted widely with subject matter experts and identified important work underway at CSIRO, the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA), Macquarie University and Queensland University of Technology.

A webinar hosted by Council on 6th September 2021 included presentations from these organisations. A summary of this webinar can be found on the [Prevent Fruit Fly](#) website.

AUSPestCheck and Data Privacy

The Council received a briefing and update in relation to [AUSPestCheck™](#), a data aggregation software system to collate and provide disease and pest surveillance data that provides users with a real-time picture of pest numbers and spread. The database includes information collected from general and targeted surveillance activities in agricultural and environmental settings. In-built alerts advise users when the numbers of a target pest increase above a threshold or when a pest moves into a new area. For further information on AUSPestCheck™ contact apc@phau.com.au.

Council heard about the new research within CSIRO's Trusted Agrifood [Exports](#) program to address the secondary use of pest data, and some of the confidentiality and privacy concerns for enhanced data value. The CSIRO provided an overview of the value that can be derived from the secondary use of surveillance and compliance data (using Qfly data as an example). They further explained how privacy and data sensitivity concerns that currently limit data use, can potentially be overcome through the application of privacy-preserving methodologies emerging from other domains.

Future of the Council

The Council is currently contracted under a co-investment initiative between Hort Innovation and state governments, which concludes in December 2021. Council reflected on key achievements of this contract (2018-21) including the National Fruit Fly Strategy 2020-2025 and annual Implementation Plans, the 2021 National Fruit Fly Symposium, enhanced consultation and advice between growers, stakeholders, and peak industry bodies, as well as the invigoration of communication pathways such as the Prevent Fruit Fly Website and Twitter pages.

A high-level proposal for the next Council contract has been developed in consultation with investors. There is general support for the continuation of Council, noting that there are opportunities for continuous improvement which will be considered following an independent review of the Council's operation and composition in 2021. Suggestions for Council improvement can be submitted to fruitfly@phau.com.au.

Next Meeting

The next Council meeting is scheduled for the 15th and 16th of December. The location of the meeting will be dependent on COVID-19 and its associated restrictions at that time.

