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Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee  
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## **MAF restructuring and potential impacts on GW biosecurity functions**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee about the potential impact of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries restructuring on the ability of Greater Wellington to deliver pest management and biosecurity functions.

### **2. The decision-making process and significance**

No decision is being sought in this report. The report is produced for Councillors update.

### **3. Background**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Ministry of Fisheries (MoF), Biosecurity New Zealand (MAF BNZ) and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) were merged on 1 July 2011. This merger was a return to their origins for a number of these entities. During the 1990s and 2000s the Ministry of Fisheries was separated from what was then the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and MAF BNZ and the NZFSA were formed from within MAF. These individual agencies merged into what was then called the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The 1 July 2011 merger of MAF, MoF, BNZ and NZFSA disestablished 466 positions within the four existing organisations, with an offset of 225 new positions formed within the new Ministry.

The Honorary David Carter was appointed Minister for Primary Industries in December 2011, followed by the formation of a Ministry for Primary Industries in March 2012. The Ministry will encompass the dealings of the primary industries of agriculture, forestry, horticulture and fisheries. National biosecurity and food safety activities will remain the responsibility of the new Ministry. The designation of Ministry for Primary Industries came into effect at the end of April 2012.

#### 4. **Ministry for Primary Industries and GW biosecurity functions**

The new Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) will continue to hold responsibility for the leadership of the New Zealand biosecurity system. This encompasses facilitating international trade, protecting the health of New Zealanders and ensuring the welfare of the environment, terrestrial and freshwater flora and fauna, marine life and Maori resources. The Ministry states that it will 'provide 'whole of system leadership of New Zealand's Biosecurity system.'

The former MAF BNZ team is now in two arms – awareness and partnership, and pest response programmes. The size of the team responsible for biosecurity functions was reduced during the restructure, and no senior managers from the former MAF BNZ were appointed to the top levels of management in the new structure. This reflects the shift in focus of the wider organisation towards the primary production sector. The loss of high level representation and reduced staff numbers are likely to have some negative impact on the ability to deliver national biosecurity functions.

Greater Wellington (GW) works in conjunction with the Ministry in relation to a number of biosecurity activities. The GW Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002 – 2022 (RPMS) is formed under the Biosecurity Act 1993, of which many of the central functions are managed and implemented by the MPI and the Minister for Primary Industries. The MPI provides leadership on national biosecurity issues, with Regional Councils often undertaking the implementation at a regional level.

Recent GW involvement with the MPI has included the Future of Pest Management Project, National Pet Trade Biosecurity Project, National Pest Plant Accord review and the review and amendment of the Biosecurity Act 1993. The majority of these projects have continued through the restructuring, but there has been poor staff continuity and delays to the deadlines on some projects.

The new Ministry will provide detailed information on their structure and business plan in mid-2012.

##### **Current projects involving the MPI and regional councils include:**

- **Changes to the Biosecurity Act** – partially as a result of the Future of Pest Management project a number of amendments have been proposed to the Biosecurity Act 1993. As a result of this Regional Council Pest Management Plans (formerly Strategies) will take a slightly different form. The MPI will produce a National Policy Direction, which acts as a guide for pest management activities under the amended Biosecurity Act.
- **Good neighbour requirements** – Under the amended Act agencies such as DOC and LINZ will now have to meet the requirements of the Regional Pest Management Plans (RPMP). Previously Crown

agencies were exempt from these requirements. This will improve pest management across the region and assist with boundary pest problems.

- **Cost Benefit Analysis** – each species within a Pest Management Plan is subject to a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) to consider its suitability for inclusion in the plan, and what level of management the species should be subject to. Because Crown agencies are now going to be bound to the RPMP, there is an expectation that regional councils will conduct more detailed analysis with a high level of consistency between the regions.
- **Leadership and accountability** – Leadership functions in biosecurity are now clearly defined, with the MPI acting as the overall leader for pest management systems, and regional councils’ holding the same role within the regions. The Minister will now have the power to assign responsibility for a pest issue to an individual agency. In some incursions, such as the varroa mite, it has been unclear who is responsible for the management, delaying the response.
- **Loss of the MAF BNZ brand** – the former MAF made a considerable investment in the Biosecurity brand with its distinctive black and yellow insignia. Through high publicity campaigns such as the didymo awareness programme, biosecurity issues have been taken to the public outside of the usual interest groups. The loss of this branding will impact on the ability to publicise national biosecurity issues.
- **Legacy pests** – the former MAF had little involvement in the management of ‘legacy pests’ such as possums, gorse and rabbits, with these continuing to be largely the responsibility of agencies such as Regional and District councils, DOC and the Animal Health Board. It is likely there will be little change following the restructuring – although pest control for agricultural production may gain more priority.

## 5. Communication

The formation of the Ministry for Primary Industry is not likely to have a significant impact on the day to day biosecurity and pest management functions of GW. The merger into the larger Ministry and the reduction in biosecurity staff may affect the ability to respond to national biosecurity issues and limit the ability to provide centralised biosecurity functions. The proposed communication by the new Ministry for Primary Industry in mid 2012 outlining the role of and the new staff structure will highlight the major changes and shed more light on the potential impact on GW.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Committee*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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