MPI Guidelines for Sea Container Co-Management, Equivalent and Recognised System Applications

Overview

Co-management, equivalence and recognised systems are options that MPI utilises to help manage risk offshore and reduce biosecurity interventions at the border across the sea container pathway.
These guidelines are designed to assist in any application to MPI seeking approval to implement a co-management, equivalence or recognised system. MPI reserves the right to decline any proposal submitted.

Co-management is defined as *'MPI sharing management of biosecurity risks and hazards through the application of non-MPI resources'*. This includes where industry performs specific tasks on MPI's behalf, or where industry-led systems and processes are recognised by MPI as achieving the same or better levels of biosecurity risk management than traditional MPI systems. An example is accredited persons inspecting low risk containers in NZ as required by Import Health Standards, and as per responsibilities given under the Biosecurity Act.

An equivalent system is defined as '*the use of different biosecurity risk management interventions to achieve the same or better outcome as prescribed in a standard*'. In other words, substituting one standard approved practice for a system that is shown to achieve the same or better outcome. Examples include substituting the fumigation of a container with heat treatment or where used vehicles are cleaned offshore by a 3rd party reducing the need for full MPI inspections on arrival in NZ. Equivalent systems are approved by a Chief Technical Officer and are based on criteria outlined in ISPM 24: Guidelines for the determination and recognition of equivalence of phytosanitary measures.

A recognised system is defined as '*a system that recognises the efforts taken by shipping lines and offshore cleaning facilities to import compliant empty sea containers into New Zealand*'. This will allow an intervention rate for a risk profile managed under a recognised system to be as low as 1% at the border.

When submitting an application to have either a co-management, equivalent or recognised system approved, the applicant must clearly show how the risk good(s) will be processed and/or managed to meet the required import health standard, defining the process and/ or system outcomes plus what contingencies around system setup are in place to deal with non-

compliances. Consideration should also be given to monitoring, auditing and quality assurance plans within the proposed system along with any benefits and risks.

All costs associated with the development of the application and the undertaking of any trials, are incurred by the company seeking approval.

MPI will provide guidance and answer questions about any proposals submitted. However MPI will not write or develop any proposal.

For further information contact:

Equivalent system applications:
Facilities and Pathways, Plants and Pathways Directorate, Regulation and Assurance Branch, MPI

Email: standards@mpi.govt.nz

Co-management and Recognised system applications:
Biosecurity New Zealand, Border Clearance Services, Operations Branch, MPI

Email: seacontainer.systems@mpi.govt.nz

Approval Process

The approval process consists of six stages. Each stage is outlined in more detail below.

1. Engage
2. Define criteria to meet
3. Submit application
4. Evaluation of application
5. Decision
6. Implementation

1. Engage

Preliminary discussions occur between the applicant and MPI to consider the applicants proposal and to ensure this is the right approach for both parties. Consideration will be given to:

- What is the issue or opportunity?
- What current practice or system is proposed to be replaced or enhanced?
- What are the objectives?
- What are the benefits? Are there clear benefits to both parties and NZ Inc?
- Would this proposal be covered better by an amendment to an Import Health Standard or how risk profiles are used?

- What are the expectations of the applicant?
- What are the business or legal implications of this proposal?
- What impacts on the supply chain will this have?
- What issues or objections may arise from this proposal?
- What existing compliance issues are present?
- What costs are expected to be incurred by all parties?
- What is the size/ volume of the pathway covered by the proposal?
- Will the proposal be operationally viable and sustainable?
- Does this fit with MPI mandate?

2. Define Criteria to Meet

The proposal will be evaluated against criteria that are defined by MPI. Criteria can include:

- Specifying any relevant Import Health Standard, existing process and/ or system outcomes that the proposal must meet
- Performance measures to be met (these will be aligned with any similar existing systems)
- Quality systems to be met
- Monitoring, data collection and reporting systems to be met
- Long-term viability and sustainability of the proposal (including cost-benefit analysis)
- Volumes of goods imported (is it sufficient to warrant a co-management or equivalence system)

Other information that must be discussed and considered as part of the proposal includes:

- MPI audit regimes for equivalent and co management systems.
- Outcomes and actions when non-compliance occurs
- Decision about whether 'desk-top' approval is only required or if trials/ tests are also required as part of the proposal
- Identification of issues. Agreement reached on how to approach, manage or address the issues and who is responsible for them
- Roles and responsibilities in the approval process
- Costs and charging

MPI Assurance Regime

This will be designed to best monitor the system and give assurance of system outcomes. Assessments will include:

- System audits - regular (possibly annual) audit of the quality systems, records and reporting

- Verification audits - inspection of goods passing through the system to ensure the system is meeting its performance targets.
  NB. Regimes may differ from system to system.

3. Submit Application

The following information should be included in each system application:

Covering Letter

- A covering letter should be submitted outlining the proposal and providing primary contact details.

Application

- All applications should be submitted electronically (word or PDF format).
- Include full company details, sub-contractors and other Government agencies involved.
  NB: Checks may be undertaken on the company and nominated individual. These could involve police checks

Supporting Material

- A detailed description of the equivalent/ co-management or recognised system, including:
  1. How the system will operate and meet the criteria
  2. How the goods will be processed i.e. physical inspection / mechanical washing / treatments applied
  3. Monitoring processes in place
  4. Assurance of processes in place
  5. Collection of relevant data
  6. Security of goods to prevent recontamination
  7. Other general information about the system

- Results of any trials and/or test results including:
  1. Outcomes of trials and/or tests
  2. Verified performance measures achieved by the system

- Description and location of any facility where any part of the system is to be undertaken, including:
  1. Facility maintenance and monitoring procedures and security
  2. Facility management and disposal of biosecurity material/ waste
  3. Treatment and storage areas (maps or aerial photos)

4. Is the facility offshore or in NZ

- Description of staff training applicable to the system including:
  1. What training is undertaken
  2. Ongoing assessments, measurements and re-training

- Description of contingency plans to address:
  1. Non-compliance
  2. System failures

- Description of quality systems including:
  1. Purpose and scope of the system
  2. Delegated responsibilities
  3. Document control
  4. Record keeping
  5. Training and assessment
  6. Internal audit mechanisms
  7. Quality control systems

- Management of issues
  1. Proposal on how any issues identified will be managed or addressed

4. Evaluation

MPI will complete a desk-top review and (where required) will review trial results for the proposed system. The system will be evaluated against its ability to meet the criteria (step 2), the long term viability and sustainability of the system and management of issues including non-compliances.

Where required, clarification or amendments to systems will be referred back to the applicant to change or update and resubmit.

Timelines for evaluation will be agreed and will be dependent on system complexity and the time required for review

5. Decision

A final approval decision will be made once all required actions have been completed, and MPI have evaluated the system. Approval will be given when MPI is confident of system performance.

Formal written approval will be provided by MPI, signed off by a person with appropriate authority.

6. Implementation

Once the approval process is complete, the following is required:

- An implementation plan involving relevant parties, with an appropriate transition period
- Communicate the system to all staff and revise work instructions for both parties
- Signing of agreements by both parties.