

The Biosecurity Ministerial Advisory Committee

Future proofing New Zealand's
Biosecurity System

Introduction

A strong biosecurity system helps protect New Zealand's values, way of life, natural and productive resources and biodiversity from the harmful effects of pests and diseases.

With the system facing new and more complex challenges, partnerships are more important than ever. MPI and the Government cannot do it alone. A resilient and robust approach to biosecurity requires continuous innovation, supported by science and technology and a commitment to prevention and response.

BMAC believe that an effective and sustainable biosecurity system requires an apolitical Stewardship Council that oversees performance and coordination across the system. We see the key system pressures as:

- Ensuring appropriate governance and leadership is in place;
- Maintaining an adaptive approach to operating environments;
- Empowering 4.7 million New Zealanders to play their part; and
- Resolving structural issues, which includes adequate resourcing, incursion preparedness and response.

Māori bring a unique knowledge and perspective to biosecurity in their role as kaitiaki of New Zealand's taonga and a Treaty partner. Ensuring Māori involvement at all levels of the biosecurity system is an important priority, especially in system stewardship.

BMAC believe adequate resourcing for Māori involvement needs to be prioritised. Accordingly, BMAC believe cultural capability needs to be enhanced across the system to ensure all participants can effectively engage with Māori. Building these skills is a core part of facilitating understanding and improving biosecurity outcomes for Māori and future generations.

This document aims to provide value to any future stewardship arrangements and highlight the key issues that BMAC see as being foundational to ensuring an effective biosecurity system. We look forward to seeing these issues progressed and resolved.

Our advice is structured in:

- Wellbeing;
- System Stewardship;
- Biosecurity 2025;
- Preparedness and Responses; and
- Resourcing.

Wellbeing

At our final meeting in November, we focussed our attention on understanding biosecurity's contribution to wellbeing.

BMAC considers biosecurity is central to protecting natural capital. However, biosecurity risks spans across and feed into all capitals - natural, social, human and financial. Depleting and degrading these capitals can irreversibly reduce the availability of benefits to future generations.

Using a wellbeing framework to support decision-making and policy development will ensure all capitals are considered and trade-offs are more transparent. However, we acknowledge there may be difficulty in quantifying the impact of these values for different people and community's wellbeing. This is an area that will require further consideration.

Ensuring a wellbeing approach is applied to biosecurity acknowledges the importance of economic growth but also recognises the environmental, cultural and social values underpinning wellbeing in New Zealand.

We believe the Biosecurity 2025 programme addresses the wellbeing capitals and will increase wellbeing across New Zealand, for generations to come.

Response funding decisions

New Zealand's unique native flora and fauna are a vital component of our biodiversity and culture. With a number of recent incursions threatening our native species, a wellbeing framework is needed to consider and prioritise cultural, social, environmental and economic values alongside each other.

Communicate connections

Biosecurity underpins the wellbeing capitals with positive effects for employment, income, health, cultural identity, and environmental quality, but often goes unnoticed. Making the connections explicit between wellbeing and biosecurity will be necessary in future communications.

Continual focus of wellbeing

We believe there will be an enduring focus on wellbeing. The resilience and health of New Zealand's culture, environment, and communities are important to consider alongside economic growth. Future biosecurity stewardship arrangements will need to give consideration to monitoring wellbeing and system health, as part of its work programmes and agenda setting.

System Stewardship

The Biosecurity 2025 programme has facilitated high levels of engagement across the system. However, there is a risk of losing the faith of participants, if tangible action and change is not delivered. We believe a stewardship function is best placed to drive this momentum.

In addition, system stewardship is needed to provide independent strategic oversight and drive the implementation of Biosecurity 2025. We consider the following key attributes need to be addressed:

- **Te Ao Māori** – recognising the role of Māori as kaitiaki and shared leadership.
- **Diversity of perspectives** - ensuring a range of viewpoints and values are represented. A broad knowledge base helps to support robust decision making.
- **Trust and Transparency** – engaging externally and being visible and transparent to the wider public to engender trust and ensure gravitas and mana.
- **Independence** – working separately from MPI to minimise potential for and perceptions of bias.
- **Coordination** – driving coordination and momentum for Biosecurity 2025 implementation.
- **Connecting the System**– providing trusted information, providing an outlet to bring relevant issues to the table and continually scanning for risks across the whole system.
- **Confidence** – reporting and communicating with Ministers, MPI and the public.

BMAC believe progressing stewardship arrangements to be of high importance, particularly the high value in having independent system level advice and driving Biosecurity 2025 implementation. Key functions to deliver these arrangements could include: whole of system approach, system scanning and performance outcomes.

Connecting the system

A big cultural shift will be needed to achieve the ambition for shared leadership as set out in Biosecurity 2025. MPI is part of a wider system and empowering leadership of others in the system to play their role, is important. BMAC consider that MPI has a vital role in supporting shared leadership in the biosecurity system.

System advocates and champions can help to drive Biosecurity 2025 outcomes and communicate the biosecurity story. We believe empowering these advocates in the biosecurity system will help messaging reach wider audiences and enable people to take a more proactive role in managing biosecurity risks.

MPI

The MPI Biosecurity Governance Board, provides a critical function to support MPI's leadership role in the biosecurity system. BMAC believes that an independent chair or member should be considered to encourage partnership in the biosecurity system.

System scanning

Horizon scans can provide a forward-looking function that coordinates across the system and helps to identify the risks, challenges and opportunities coming our way. System scanning can help to inform planning, agenda setting and ensure the biosecurity system priorities remain fit for purpose. We recommend any system stewardship arrangements use this tool moving forward.

Performance Outcomes

Establishing meaningful performance measures for the biosecurity system is important to guide continuous improvement. BMAC understands that MPI is co-developing/designing the development of performance indicators with participants from the Biosecurity 2025 Working Groups.

Linking these measures and outcomes to measure the biosecurity systems contribution to wellbeing will ensure decision making takes into account the broader impacts. We believe it is important to continue this work to help guide system improvements.

Biosecurity 2025

The Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement sets a common direction for all participants to sustain a robust and resilient biosecurity system. This programme needs to maintain momentum through broad engagement and needs to be appropriately resourced and funded and deliver the Biosecurity 2025 Implementation Plan.

The Committee believes that focussed effort will be particularly important in the following areas: Communications, data infrastructure, science and technology, and marine.

Communications

Finding the right values and touchpoints to connect across the system is important to ensure community wide engagement and to increase action. BMAC believe a collaborative effort across government and other stakeholders is needed to ensure a wider audience for biosecurity. We believe Biosecurity 2025 and MPI are not alone in communicating biosecurity messaging, but must take an active lead.

Accordingly, Ko Tātou This Is Us communicates the importance of biosecurity and what it protects effectively and has wide support. Ko Tātou is a catalyst for system participants to pick up biosecurity messaging and communicate messaging more widely through their networks.

Data infrastructure

Critical infrastructure is needed for the biosecurity system to help deliver improved information systems that are capable of forecasting in real time. MPI systems have limited interoperability, which is a significant risk for MPI's information management and emerging risk system.

This area is highlighted as a system priority in Biosecurity 2025. We are aware that MPI is taking steps to improve the situation. However, BMAC believe resolving these information technology constraints will need continual organisational focus.

Science and technology

Science and technology underpins the biosecurity system. We believe it is important to enhance capability and capacity to ensure a robust biosecurity system and that work priorities are effective. Sustained effort to link science and operational areas effectively is required.

Current technologies to detect biosecurity threats, for instance manual inspections, will not be sustainable for the projected future growth in travel and trade volumes. Science and technology advancements can provide transformational tools and knowledge to future proof New Zealand's biosecurity system, particularly the benefits of being able to analyse 'big data'. Accordingly, we believe this area requires a substantial increase in investment.

The Committee considers the current science environment has led to a lack of coordination in science that addresses biosecurity needs. New Zealand needs research and development programmes that target solutions to provide faster and

more effective biosecurity surveillance and detection tools, while reducing the need for human intervention.

MPI has a key role to mobilise and advocate for biosecurity and primary industry science. BMAC support MPI's decision to appoint a departmental science advisor but believe a specific biosecurity science advisor role that can consider more than just primary industry needs, is justified.

A strategic approach is required to balance immediate operational needs and future demands. A biosecurity science advisor could support delivering a more coordinated landscape for biosecurity science funding and priorities.

Marine

Work in the marine area has not had a high profile and as such, priorities and resources have not been as apparent. BMAC are happy to see this area reflected as a critical area of focus in the Biosecurity 2025 Implementation Plan. BMAC strongly support the increased prioritisation of marine biosecurity within MPI and we believe it is important to maintain a strategic approach.

More visibility is needed across the marine biosecurity system including the important roles of Maritime New Zealand, industry and local government.

Response to the Implementation Plan

BMAC believe it is important for MPI to demonstrate its leadership role in the delivery of the Biosecurity 2025 Implementation Plan. The Committee believes an effective way for MPI to demonstrate this leadership and to enhance transparency would be to develop a specific MPI Implementation Plan, outlining how MPI will deliver to the wider Biosecurity 2025 programme.

Preparedness and responses

Developing capability across the system is important to ensure we have people with the right skillsets to mobilise in a response. Partnerships across the system are critical to maintaining capability and capacity to respond to incursions.

The Government Industry Agreement for Biosecurity Readiness and Response (GIA)

GIA is an important vehicle for industry and government to achieve better biosecurity outcomes ahead of time. Strong leadership is needed to ensure both Government and Industry's aspirations and outcomes are successfully achieved. This partnership arrangement has made significant progress, but Operational Agreements have yet to be tested in a major response.

Regular reviews of the GIA and its performance will provide opportunities for industry and government to work together to improve the operating environment and strengthen working partnerships. Reviewing and evaluating response practice and performance will drive improvements in responses and at the system level.

Industry have highlighted to us an interest in a two way sharing of information and knowledge. MPI and Industry regularly conduct research and gather data which could be of value to each party and help inform work on emerging threats. In addition, there is real value in existing GIA industry partners and other industry bodies sharing their learnings and understanding how biosecurity risks in one sector or industry can affect another.

Non-commercial interests, including biodiversity

GIA has encouraged Government and Industry partnerships, for shared decision making and cost sharing in responses. However, there is an opportunity for other interests to be included in this arrangement. BMAC believe it is worth considering a wider range of social, economic, environmental and cultural values using the GIA instrument, including more actively addressing biodiversity.

Further opportunities

BMAC believe the GIA vehicle could prove to be a valuable tool beyond responses to drive system level improvements. We believe further opportunities could include:

- Expanding the GIA partnership beyond cost-sharing and decision-making;
- Cooperating in building capability and capacity for response preparedness, including secondments to support capability development; and
- Developing a mechanism to transition from a response to long-term management, which remains an unresolved area for GIA.

Resourcing

There are increasing pressures on the biosecurity system. The major responses over the last 18 months to 2 years appear to have resulted in resourcing constraints in MPI. The Committee believe there is a need to monitor this area and to ensure resources remain available to maintain work in critical strategic and system wide areas.

People capability and capacity: drawing on the system

BMAC appreciate MPI faces large resourcing requirements for responses. However, we believe there is an opportunity to draw on the capability and capacity from across the system, which holds a diverse and useful range of capabilities and skills. Leveraging networks across the system will help build stronger system capability and draw on more resources to build a standing army.

4.7 million Support

While MPI has a statutory role in leading biosecurity, increasing participation in the biosecurity system is the only realistic way to meet the increasing pressures. Achieving successful partnerships requires a long term commitment.

Ko Tātou has made the first steps but will require consistent resourcing and commitment from all parties to get the long term gains. Greater collaboration in the biosecurity system will ensure there are system advocates and champions helping to push a way forward.

Technology

Ensuring new tools for surveillance, diagnostics and treatment are developed remains important, otherwise supply chains will choke with the increasing volumes of trade and tourism. There are opportunities to incentivise and increase the effectiveness of public and private investment in new biosecurity tools, especially supporting cross-system collaboration on biosecurity science and data sharing.

Innovative solutions will allow the border to move away from continually increasing human resourcing and towards greater compliance and less friction at the border. Accordingly, we consider technology investment to be of high importance to ensure a more robust biosecurity system.