

AUSTRALIA'S IMPORT RESTRICTIONS ON DURIAN

Response from Australia to Thailand's statement
at the Meeting of 8-9 November 2000

1. The representative of Australia thanked Thailand for raising this issue, and indicated that it might be of advantage to the Committee to review the historical background in a little more detail in order to draw out points which might be of generic interest.
2. Confirming that the matter had first been raised by Thailand with Australia in 1991, he noted that Thailand had provided an initial list of three arthropod pests and twelve diseases in April of that year. However these lists had been incomplete and the relevant Australian authority had requested more comprehensive information on the incidence, importance, distribution and control of pests and diseases in Thailand in order to allow commencement of an import risk analysis (IRA). No further information had been provided by Thailand until, more than three years later, a list of five arthropod pests and seven pathogens of durian fruit had been submitted. The Thai authorities had then been requested to supply further information including on certain specific pests of durian recorded as present in Thailand and in neighbouring countries.
3. Further information exchange on a range of issues had then followed, and in 1997 Thailand has submitted a new list of pests and diseases including 49 arthropod pests and 16 diseases. The import risk analysis procedure had then been initiated in January 1998, leading eventually to the drafting of an arrangement establishing conditions for import of fresh durian fruit from Thailand into Australia. These conditions reflected the very conservative approach to the appropriate level of protection which Australia maintains as a matter of government policy, consistent with its rights under the SPS Agreement.
4. The representative of Australia noted that the history of this matter had been strongly influenced by the difficulty which was commonly encountered by all Members, and particularly developing countries, in producing comprehensive and reliable lists of endemic pests and diseases of the commodity concerned; such lists were essential to permit a proper import risk analysis to be conducted.
5. The representative of Australia further drew to the attention of the Committee that the specific matters raised by Thailand on the present occasion had been included in written representations made recently by the Thai authorities to their Australian counterparts. The Australian authorities had promptly provided a detailed technical response.
6. In relation to the Australian requirements for cutting of a specified minimum number of fruits in order to detect durian seed borer (DSB – *Mudaria luteileprosa*), the approach followed was an internationally standard one where the objective was 95 per cent confidence of detecting DSB at an incidence of 0.5 per cent in infested fruit in a consignment. Australia followed a similar cutting regime for inspection of exports and imports of some other horticultural commodities. As well, the same fruit cutting requirement applied to the movement of mango from some areas of Australia to

other areas of Australia in order to control risk of mango seed weevil. However, in response to concerns raised by Thailand on the basis of its examination of Australia's draft import risk analysis, the Australian authority had amended the proposed cutting conditions to allow culled fruits to be included in the random samples taken from an export consignment. This would have the effect of reducing the economic impact of the cutting requirement.

7. While the Australian requirements do not provide for any specific alternative to the fruit cutting procedure, the final import risk analysis states that other non-destructive methods of inspection can be substituted if efficacy data is presented which shows that the alternative provides as equivalent level of protection.

8. Australia also requires that exports to Australia of fresh durian fruit from Thailand be limited to the period from April to September because this period corresponds with the period during which environmental conditions in Australia are unfavourable for the survival and establishment of DSB were it to enter. However, this period also coincides with the main fruiting season in Thailand. Furthermore, Australia's requirement that exports to Australia be limited to the eastern region of Thailand reflects the assessment of the Australian authorities that orchards in this region have more advanced agronomic management and a solid pest management regime in place.

9. Finally, the representative of Australia noted that the import protocol will be reviewed after the first year of trade.
