



AUSTRALIAN
**Prawn
Farmers**
ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS OF BIOSECURITY BREACHES BY FOUR CORNERS VERY CONCERNING FOR PRAWN FARMERS

The Four Corners program last night raised very serious allegations of biosecurity breaches affecting not only the Australian prawn industry but also Australia's agricultural industry.

"These allegations are very concerning and we continue to be extremely alarmed" Kim Hooper, Executive Officer of the Australian Prawn Farmers Association said today after watching the ABC Four Corners program.

"Our farmers are angry and feel not enough has been done to stop white spot entering our country and waterways, putting their livelihoods and the livelihoods of future generations at significant risk.

Because of our ongoing concerns, in May 2018 APFA commissioned Dr Matt Landos to undertake retail testing from supermarkets around the Gold Coast region. These were of uncooked prawn meat products. Virus in such frozen samples has shown in the past to be infectious and capable of transmitting white spot. Out of 18 retail samples 1 returned positive" She advised "any positive detection is one too many. Dr Landos provided this information to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in early June" Kim stated.

"This is only a small sample but concerning to us nonetheless, and we welcome news by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources yesterday that they are undertaking their own testing and hope the complete results will be shared with industry as soon as the results are known.

"Although not harmful to human health, white spot is devastating to decapod crustaceans and affects not only the Australian farmed prawn industry but other Australian seafood industries. The prawn farmers pride themselves on having a clean and green reputation.

For over 10 years, through numerous government inquiries and hearings, the Australian prawn farming industry has constantly highlighted the significant risk to the industry from the Government and department's sub-standard biosecurity and import measures.

Even as far back as 2006, the Queensland government had written to Biosecurity Australia advising them that of 16 batches of imported prawns tested, 87.5% tested positive for white spot. We warned them then and nothing was done.

The ABC Four Corners allege serious breaches by individuals to successfully evade Australia's biosecurity system. We ask the Department what is happening regarding these prosecutions? At the end of the day it is our industry, our farmers, their families and Australia's reputation that is being hurt.

The independent report by the Inspector-General of Biosecurity in December last year, alone systematically highlighted these risks, including importer behavior and inadequate resources, and still government did not apply any valid control measures such as cooking or an Acceptable Level of Protection to the prawn industry, similar to other industries such as chicken and pork. We must have a harmonised ALOP.

We have constantly tried to effect positive change within government policy as no agricultural industry should be subjected to the poor oversight as we have seen applied to the importation of prawns.

From what was shown last night, the biosecurity risk level is not low, and Australia should not be importing raw product from white spot infected countries until the Appropriate Level of Protection is achieved." Kim advised.

"There is a way the Australian community can help us." she added.

"We urge the community to get behind the Australian prawn farming industry and the Australian seafood industry by asking where your seafood is from and buying local.

Whether you are buying from the shops or sitting down to a meal, consumers and diners deserve to know the origin of their seafood choice, and know they are supporting Australian prawn farmers and the Australian seafood industry and their families".

Contact for further information:
Kim Hooper
Executive Officer, Australian Prawn Farmers Association
E: Kim.Hooper@apfa.com.au M: 0417 006 639