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## Industry urged to submit plant biosecurity ideas

The nation's recently formed plant Research and Development Corporations' (RDCs) biosecurity effort, the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI), is calling on industry and researchers to submit ideas for pest and disease management and prevention via its newly established website.

Earlier in the year, the group – comprising Wine Australia; Forest Wood Products Australia; Cotton Research and Development Corporation; Grains Research and Development Corporation; AgriFutures Australia; Sugar Research Australia and Hort Innovation – joined forces to form the Initiative with Plant Health Australia and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Together, in 2015/16 the plant RDCs collectively invested \$62.9 million into biosecurity research, development and extension.

Executive Director and CEO of Plant Health Australia Greg Fraser, who also Chairs the initiative, said it is important that industry and research agencies put forward ideas on priorities around six key focus areas.

“We are in the process of developing our cross-sectoral research activities to support industry biosecurity, and we are calling on the nation's collective brains trust – our researchers, state agencies and producers – to have input,” he said.

“Research ideas should focus on improving the nation's understanding of the economic, environmental and social impacts of pest and diseases to help us make informed decisions on pest and disease management,” he said.

“Diagnostics and surveillance ideas, such as innovative detection technologies at borders and improved tools to demonstrate areas are free from certain pests and diseases, are also valuable.”

Mr Fraser said the sustainable management of pests, weeds and diseases was equally important to enhance our ability to trade with minimal environmental impact.

“If you have ideas for new cost-effective disinfestation treatments and in-field controls we are eager to hear them,” he said.

He said building capacity to support the future plant biosecurity system through education and training is also key.

“Ensuring plant industries are in a confident and informed position when it comes to plant biosecurity is vital. We want to hear ideas on things like PBRI-funded scholarships, professional development, mentoring programs and industry internships,” he said.

Mr Fraser said building biosecurity awareness and attitudes through stronger partnerships with industry, and all levels of government, is also a priority.

“Strong relationships are critical to successfully tackling plant biosecurity challenges in Australia. For this reason, we are keen to develop tools to engage growers and the broader community, support business continuity during incursions and minimise negative social impacts during these difficult times.”

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said the seven plant RDC's involvement in the PBRI collaboration is helping drive a new era in Australian biosecurity research.

“The role of the Rural RDCs is to prioritise, invest in, manage and evaluate research and other activities that deliver impacts for producers and the broader community. We have the skills, people and systems to effectively deliver the research management we need for better biosecurity,” he said.

In July, the RDCs appointed biosecurity expert Dr Jo Luck to lead the Initiative and make recommendations for new investment in consultation with producers and other stakeholders.

For more information on the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative, or details on how to lodge a submission, go to [www.pbri.com.au](http://www.pbri.com.au) **Media contact:** Hort Innovation Kelly Vorst-Parkes 0447 304 255 or PHA Cathy Frazer 02 6215 7708.

