



Working together to protect our future from exotic pests and diseases

Farmers consistently tell us that biosecurity risks are among the biggest risks we face as an industry. Through your sheep and beef levies, we already invest in managing this risk in several ways. For example, we work with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to develop response plans for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). We also provide industry resources and training for incursion responses, such as the recent *Mycoplasma bovis* (*M. bovis*) outbreak.

Currently, when hard decisions are being made about how New Zealand prepares to respond to an exotic pest or disease incursion and, more importantly, what to do during an actual response, we are 'in the room' and consulted. But it is the Government that makes all the final decisions.

Next month, we will be seeking your support for us to join other primary sector groups in signing the Government Industry Agreement for Biosecurity Readiness and Response Deed (GIA).

Signing the GIA would give sheep and beef farmers, through B+LNZ, a seat at the biosecurity decision-making table. Alongside other GIA Signatories, we would have more direct influence on biosecurity preparedness and response decision-making.

There would be some costs associated with signing the GIA. Contributions to biosecurity readiness and response costs would depend on the significance of the pest or disease to our sector and a funding limit we could choose to set as part of a GIA Operational Agreement.

We think that the benefits of signing the GIA, with increased certainty and control over our own biosecurity destiny, justifies potential costs. We would be better-prepared, have a pre-agreed set of minimum readiness and response commitments between industry and government, and agreed limits on our industry's potential cost-share for readiness and response activities.

If we don't sign the GIA, we would be unlikely to improve our influence over the decisions that affect our sector. The Government could also use powers under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to recover costs from industries that benefit from a response even if they have not signed the GIA. That would be a poor outcome for our sector and we would lose the opportunity to work together with government and other industries under the GIA to manage fundamental risks to all livestock farmers.

We will be launching consultation on the GIA application next month so look out for further information. This will be an important opportunity to have your say.