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The 2010 winegrape harvest - biosecurity concerns

The national winegrape harvest is underway across Australia, though not in every vineyard.

In response to the 2010 vintage's very low price outlook: it is expected that 6000ha to 8000ha of vineyards will be left un-harvested, or abandoned.

Industry analysis is that:

- Australia is producing 20-40 million cases a year more than it is selling
- at least 20% of Australia's 177,000 ha of bearing vines are surplus to requirements
- on cost of production alone, at least 17% of vineyard capacity is uneconomic.



This scenario presents major biosecurity consequences. It is vital that wine producers who continue their harvest plans and vineyard operations are not compromised by the biosecurity actions (or 'dis-actions') of others.

Plant Health Australia's Executive Director and CEO, Greg Fraser, urges growers and vineyard managers to be especially vigilant for pests and disease, and report anything at all unusual.

"Biosecurity risks escalate as the season progresses and as more vineyards are left unmanaged.



"These vineyards can become a sink for biosecurity pest and disease threats."

He says key threats include Glassy winged sharp shooter, Pierce's disease, Angular leaf scorch and Black Rot.

"Whether a vineyard is left un-harvested or abandoned, the impact on neighbours and industry is the same.

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“Both mean an increased chance of biosecurity threats if some level of vineyard pest and disease protection is not being implemented.”

“Clearly, it’s beholden upon everyone to increase their biosecurity activities and vigilance.”

Plant Health Australia (PHA) has reviewed and updated the Viticulture Industry Biosecurity Plan, which provides a blueprint for protecting the industry against exotic pests and diseases.

The updated version incorporates the latest scientific research and pest intelligence to identify the highest risk pests to the industry.

Copies can be downloaded from the PHA website at www.planthealthaustralia.com.au or the WFA site at www.wfa.org.au/industry_reports.aspx .

Greg Fraser says the risks of simply having people moving on, off or around their property are widely underestimated.

It was important for vineyard managers to:

- keep records of visitors and the origins of new plant materials to allow trace back of disease, pest or weed incursion
- have good signage to inform and direct visitors
- ensure all staff members understand all biosecurity procedures and how to recognise and report diseases, pests and weeds.

Examples of risk assessment checklists and visitor registers can be found on the Farm Biosecurity website: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

An industry formulated plan, the ‘Wine Industry Restructuring Action Agenda Statement’ (see: <http://www.wgga.com.au/industry/ES09/>) describes the extent of the Australian winegrape industries supply/demand issue and the strategies that are to be pursued.

If you see anything unusual on your property call the **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on 1800 675 888 or the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on 1800 084 881.

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Farm Biosecurity is a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA)

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