Audit report of the 2023–24 annual performance statements

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT on the 2023-24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

To the Minister for Finance

Conclusion

In my opinion, the 2023-24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF):

- present fairly DAFF's performance in achieving its purposes for the year-ended 30 June 2024; and

- are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act).

Audit criteria

In order to assess whether DAFF's annual performance statements complied with Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the PGPA Act, I applied the following criteria:

- whether DAFF's key activities, performance measures and specified targets are appropriate to measure and assess DAFF's performance in achieving its purposes;

- whether the performance statements are prepared based upon appropriate records that properly record and explain DAFF's performance; and

- whether the annual performance statements present fairly DAFF's performance in achieving DAFF's purposes in the reporting period.

Emphasis of Matter – Alignment with our Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24

I draw attention to the following disclosure within the annual performance statements under the heading, Alignment with our Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.

> The key activities and performance measures in our *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24* (PBS 2023–24) reflect those in our *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, which was the current corporate plan when the PBS 2023–24 was published. The key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* superseded those in the PBS 2023–24.

> In 2023–24 we had 2 outcome statements in the PBS 2023–24. Our 3 objectives aligned with these outcomes as shown in Table 1. Programs that contributed to our PBS 2023–24 outcomes are shown in Table 2.

These disclosures provide information which is fundamental to a reader's understanding of the reported performance information in the annual performance statements.

My conclusion is not modified in respect of these matters.

Emphasis of Matter – variation to performance information from Corporate Plan 2023–24

I draw attention to the following disclosures within the annual performance statements included in the following tables:

- *Table 1 Objective 1 Industry growth, variation to performance information from Corporate Plan 2023–24*, which reports variations to measures, targets and tolerances;
- *Table 2 Objective 2 Biosecurity, variation to performance information from Corporate Plan 2023–24*, which reports variations to key activities, measures, targets and tolerances; and
- *Table 3 Objective 3 Resilience and sustainability, variation to performance information from Corporate Plan 2023–24*, which reports variations to key activities, measures, targets and tolerances and variations to methodology and data sources.

These disclosures provide information which is fundamental to a reader's understanding of the reported performance information in the annual performance statements.

My conclusion is not modified in respect of these matters.

Accountable Authority's responsibilities

As the Accountable Authority of DAFF, the Secretary is responsible under the PGPA Act for:

- the preparation and fair presentation of annual performance statements that accurately reflect DAFF's performance and comply with the PGPA Act and Public, Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (PGPA Rule);
- keeping records about DAFF's performance in accordance with requirements prescribed by the PGPA Act; and
- establishing such internal controls that the Accountable Authority determines is necessary to enable the preparation and presentation of the annual performance statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statements

My responsibility is to conduct a reasonable assurance engagement to express an independent opinion on DAFF's annual performance statements.

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which include the relevant Standard on Assurance Engagements (ASAE) 3000 *Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information* issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

In accordance with this standard, I plan and perform my procedures to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the performance measures and accompanying results presented in the annual performance statements of DAFF fairly presents DAFF's performance in achieving its purposes and comply, in all material respects, with the PGPA Act and PGPA Rule.

The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures depend on my judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, in the annual performance statements. In making these risk assessments, I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the preparation of the annual performance statements in order to design procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

Independence and quality control

I have complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, and applied Auditing Standard ASQC 1 *Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, Other Assurance* Engagements and Related Services Engagement in undertaking this assurance engagement.

Inherent limitations

Because of inherent limitations of an assurance engagement, it is possible that fraud, error or non-compliance may occur and not be detected. An assurance engagement is not designed to detect all instances of non-compliance of the annual performance statements with the PGPA Act and PGPA Rule as it is not performed continuously throughout the period and the assurance procedures performed are undertaken on a test basis. The reasonable assurance conclusion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Australian National Audit Office

Carla Jago

Acting Deputy Auditor-General

Delegate of the Auditor-General

Canberra

3 October 2024

Part 1: Annual performance statements

Accountable authority statement

As the accountable authority for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry I present the 2023–24 annual performance statements as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

In my opinion, these performance statements accurately present the department's performance for the financial year ending 30 June 2024 and comply with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act (section 16F of the PGPA Rule).

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) is undertaking an audit of the 2023–24 annual performance statements that is yet to be finalised. I am aware that the ANAO may also form a view that the performance statements for certain measures do not meet the requirements of the PGPA Act.

The department will continue its work to improve its performance reporting, including through consideration of the feedback from the ANAO.

Adam Fennessy PSM
Secretary
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

02 October 2024

Performance improvements

Our *Corporate Plan 2023–24* provided performance measures and targets for the reporting period. As part of the continuous improvement of our performance framework, during the year we reviewed and updated some of these measures. This was part of a major review of our performance reporting that reflects our commitment to better demonstrate to the Parliament, public, and stakeholders how we deliver on our purposes.

Together, our purpose, role and objectives form our purposes, consistent with the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (PGPA Rule) and the Department of Finance resource management guides.

Our purposes reflect the government's key areas of focus for our department as set out in the Administrative Arrangements Orders and the regulatory systems and legislation that govern our work.

We developed an Enterprise Performance Framework (Figure 4) to provide a key reference point to strengthen our non-financial performance reporting, and provide a consistent approach to planning, monitoring and reporting across our department. When fully implemented, this new approach to performance reporting will create a clearer line of sight between our purposes and the key activities we undertake. This framework reflects our improvements to embed an enterprise approach to performance reporting while building this capability across our department.

We reviewed and improved our performance measures from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* to better reflect the breadth of activities we undertake to deliver on our purposes and introduced 3 new performance measures to the 2023–24 annual performance statements. Table 4, Table 6 and Table 8 summarise the changes from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*. Further updates are in our *Corporate Plan 2024–25*.

Figure 4 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Enterprise Performance Framework
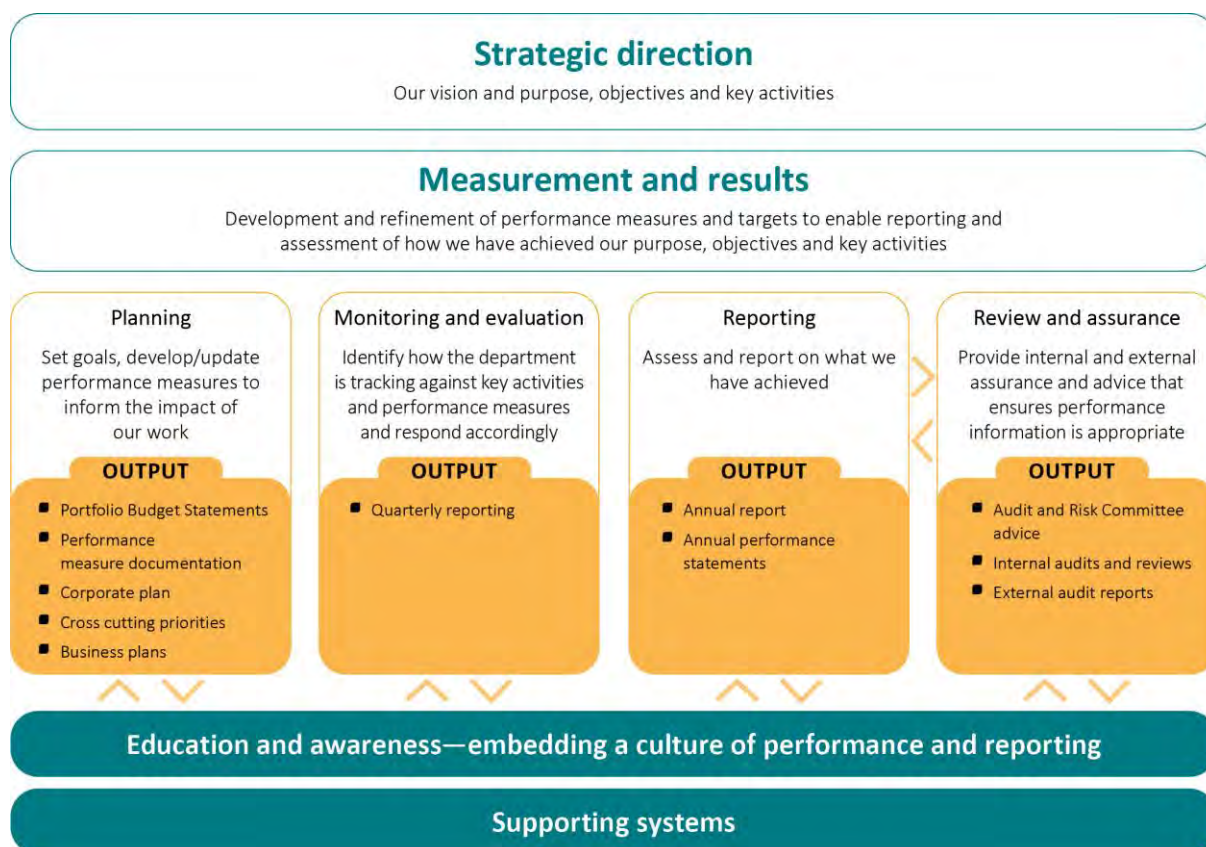
Alignment with our Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24

The key activities and performance measures in our *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24* (PBS 2023–24) reflect those in our *Corporate Plan 2022–23*, which was the current corporate plan when the PBS 2023–24 was published. The key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* supersede those in the PBS 2023–24.

In 2023–24, we had 2 outcome statements in the PBS 2023–24. Our 3 objectives aligned with these outcomes as shown in Table 1. Programs that contributed to our PBS 2023–24 outcomes are shown in Table 2.

Table 1 Department outcomes and objectives, 2023–24

PBS 2023–24 outcome	Corporate Plan 2023–24 objective
Outcome 1: More sustainable, productive, internationally competitive and profitable Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries through policies and initiatives that promote better resource management practices, innovation, self-reliance and improved access to international markets.	Objective 1 Industry growth: Support industry to grow towards a $100 billion agriculture, fisheries and forestry industry by 2030 amid changing global market conditions. Objective 3 Resilience and sustainability: Increase the contribution agriculture, fisheries and forestry make to a healthy, sustainable and low-emissions environment.
Outcome 2: Safeguard Australia's animal and plant health status to maintain overseas markets and protect the economy and environment from the impact of exotic pests and diseases, through risk assessment, inspection and certification, and the implementation of emergency response arrangements for Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries.	Objective 2 Biosecurity: Strengthen our national biosecurity system to provide an appropriate level of protection to Australia's people, our environment and economy from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow.

Table 2 Programs by Portfolio Budget Statement 2023–24 outcome

PBS 2023–24 outcome	Program
Outcome 1: More sustainable, productive, internationally competitive and profitable Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries through policies and initiatives that promote better resource management practices, innovation, self-reliance and improved access to international markets.	1.1 Agricultural Adaptation 1.2 Sustainable Management – Natural Resources 1.3 Forestry Industry 1.4 Fishing Industry 1.5 Horticultural Industry 1.6 Wool Industry 1.7 Grains Industry 1.8 Dairy Industry 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry 1.10 Agricultural Resources 1.11 Drought Programs 1.12 Rural Programs 1.13 International Market Access
Outcome 2: Safeguard Australia's animal and plant health status to maintain overseas markets and protect the economy and environment from the impact of exotic pests and diseases, through risk assessment, inspection and certification, and the implementation of emergency response arrangements for Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries.	2.1 Biosecurity and Export Services 2.2 Plant and Animal Health

Regulator performance reporting

Our regulatory performance measures demonstrate our regulatory activity and commitment to the 3 principles of regulator best practice, as set out in the Australian Government's *Resource Management Guide – Regulator Performance* (RMG 128). We will continue to refine and mature our regulator performance reporting in line with the 3 principles of regulator best practice.

Performance overview

The 2023–24 annual performance statements report on actual results achieved against our performance measures set out in our *Corporate Plan 2023–24*.

Industry growth objective

To deliver on this objective – Support industry to grow towards a $100 billion agriculture, fisheries and forestry industry by 2030 – we focused on 3 key activities. Table 3 shows the key activities and associated performance measures as included in our 2023–24 performance statements. Table 4 summarises the changes to performance measures from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*.

Table 3 Objective 1 Industry growth key activities and performance measures, as included in the 2023–24 annual performance statements

Key activity	Performance measure
1.1 Support industry productivity and growth through science, policy and partnerships.	IG-01 Greater growth in average agricultural productivity (adjusted for climate and weather effects) for the past 10 years, compared to average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period. IG-02 Equal or reduced cost of levies administration compared with levies disbursed. IG-03 Proportion of farm businesses making capital investments. IG-04 Encourage forestry industry investment in innovation.
1.2 Maintain and expand international markets by certifying and regulating exports and negotiating new and improved market access.	IG-05 The department negotiates new and improved technical market access to international markets. IG-06 The department negotiates to maintain technical market access to international markets when trade is threatened and restores trade where it has been lost.
1.3 Streamline export regulations and compliance arrangements.	IG-07 Increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export (moving to paperless trade).

Table 4 Objective 1 Industry growth, variation to performance information from *Corporate Plan 2023–24*

Key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*	Changes to key activity and performance measure wording made during the audit period	Other performance revisions made during the audit period
IG-04 Encourage forestry industry investment in innovation.	None.	Tolerances updated.
IG-05 Number of international markets opened or improved by the department.	IG-05 The department negotiates new and improved technical market access to international markets.	Target and tolerances added. Measure type updated.
IG-06 Potential value of trade facilitated through the prevention and/or resolution of trade disruptions.	IG-06 The department negotiates to maintain technical market access to international markets when trade is threatened and restores trade where it has been lost.	Measure type updated.
IG-07 Increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export (moving to paperless trade).	None.	Target and tolerances updated.

A new measure has been developed for the *Corporate Plan 2024–25* to demonstrate the effectiveness of our administrative obligations as a regulator of exports under the Export Control Act 2020.

We chose not to develop a separate performance measure relating to food security because it is subject to socio-economic, global and environmental factors that are beyond the control of any single entity. Our role in food security focuses primarily on agricultural production and availability, and on ensuring the efficient and safe facilitation of imports through our biosecurity operations.

Several of our performance measures support food security, including:

- annual productivity growth for agriculture, forestry and fisheries (IG-01)

- export regulations and market access arrangements (IG-05 and IG-06)

- biosecurity preparedness (all performance measures under key activity 2.1).

Biosecurity objective

To deliver on this objective – Strengthen our national biosecurity system to provide an appropriate level of protection to Australia's people, our environment and economy from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow – we focused on 3 key activities. As prescribed in the Biosecurity Act 2015, an appropriate level of protection for Australia is a high level of sanitary and phytosanitary protection aimed at reducing biosecurity risks to a very low level, but not to zero. Table 5 shows the key activities and associated performance measures as provided in our 2023–24 performance statements. We developed 2 new performance measures (BI-09 and BI-10) and updated the wording of the key activities since the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*. Table 6 summarises the changes to performance measures from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*.

Table 5 Objective 2 Biosecurity key activities and performance measures, as included in the 2023–24 annual performance statements

Key activity	Performance measure
2.1 Plan and prepare for the management of biosecurity risk pre-border through policy, fit-for-purpose regulation, targeted intelligence and education, and mature biosecurity emergency preparedness.	BI-03 Risk assessments completed in the development of import policy and regulation of biosecurity risks on imported goods.
	BI-04 Number of consignments of imported goods with khapra beetle detections is reduced as a result of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.
	BI-05 Number and extent of biosecurity preparedness exercises completed.
	BI-06 Improve the management of biosecurity risk offshore by increasing assurance activities on pre-border biosecurity arrangements.
	BI-09 Targeted public communication and engagement activities.
	BI-10 The import permits service standard is met.
2.2 Detect, monitor and mitigate biosecurity risk at the border through intelligence-informed targeting, technology-supported inspections and efficient detection methods.	BI-01 Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to: • BI-01-01 High-value cargo • BI-01-02 Approved arrangements • BI-01-03 International travellers.
	BI-02 Biosecurity service standards are met.
	BI-07 Reduction in risk of African swine fever because of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.
2.3 Respond to and minimise the impact of biosecurity incursions through appropriate post-border measures.	BI-08 Undertake compliance and enforcement actions.

Table 6 Objective 2 Biosecurity, variation to performance information from *Corporate Plan 2023–24*

Key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*	Changes to key activity and performance measure wording made during the audit period	Other performance revisions made during the audit period
Key activity 2.1 Effectively prepare for the management of biosecurity risk through pragmatic policy, fit-for-purpose regulation and mature preparedness.	Key activity 2.1 Plan and prepare for the management of biosecurity risk pre-border through policy, fit for purpose regulation, targeted intelligence and education, and mature biosecurity emergency preparedness.	Not applicable.
Key activity 2.2 Effectively detect biosecurity risk through intelligence-led targeting, technology-supported inspections and efficient detection methods.	Key activity 2.2 Detect, monitor and mitigate biosecurity risk at the border through intelligence-informed targeting, technology-supported inspections and efficient detection methods.	Not applicable.
Key activity 2.3 Minimise the impact of biosecurity incursions through appropriate post-biosecurity and post border measures.	Key activity 2.3 Respond to and minimise the impact of biosecurity incursions through appropriate post-border measures.	Not applicable.
BI-01-01 Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to high-value cargo.	None.	Tolerances updated. Moved to key activity 2.2.
BI-01-02 Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to approved arrangements.	None.	Tolerances updated. Moved to key activity 2.2.
BI-01-03 Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to international travellers.	None.	Tolerances updated. Moved to key activity 2.2.
BI-02 Biosecurity service standards are met.	None.	Tolerances updated. We moved the service standard for import permits to a new performance measure (BI-10). Moved to key activity 2.2.
BI-03 Number of risk assessments completed in the development, maintenance and revision of import regulations and assessment of plant goods.	BI-03 Risk assessments completed in the development of import policy and regulation of biosecurity risks on imported goods.	Target and tolerances added. Measure type and data sources updated.
BI-04 Number of consignments of imported goods with khapra beetle detections is reduced as a result of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.	None.	Tolerance for 'achieved' updated.
BI-06 Expand offshore biosecurity arrangements.	BI-06 Improve the management of biosecurity risk offshore by increasing assurance activities on pre-border biosecurity arrangements.	Measure type, target and tolerances updated. Moved to key activity 2.1.
BI-07 Reduction in risk of African swine fever because of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.	None.	Target updated.
BI-09 Targeted public communication and engagement activities.	New performance measure.	New performance measure. Aligns to key activity 2.1.

Key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*	Changes to key activity and performance measure wording made during the audit period	Other performance revisions made during the audit period
BI-10 The import permits service standard is met.	New performance measure.	New performance measure which has been extracted from BI-02. Aligns to key activity 2.1.

Resilience and sustainability objective

To deliver on this objective – Increase the contribution agriculture, fisheries and forestry make to a healthy, sustainable and low-emissions environment – we focused on 3 key activities. Table 7 shows the key activities and associated performance measures as provided in the 2023–24 annual performance statements. We developed one new performance measure (RS-04) since the *Corporate Plan 2023– 24* as shown in Table 7. Table 8 summarises the changes to performance measures from the *Corporate Plan 2023– 24*.

Table 7 Objective 3 Resilience and suitability key activities and performance measures, as included in the 2023–24 annual performance statements

Key activity	Performance measure
3.1 Increase opportunities for industry to reduce emissions and contribute to Australia's net-zero goals.	RS-01 Delivery of projects, programs and activities that help the agricultural industry transition to a net-zero economy.
3.2 Support the increased adoption of sustainable management practices through funding partnerships and engagement activities.	RS-02 Sustainable farming practices are funded through the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program. RS-04 The proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks that are sustainably managed.
3.3 Strengthen the resilience of industry and its ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.	RS-03 Administer annual funding from the Future Drought Fund to build drought resilience in Australia's agricultural industry in accordance with the *Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020–2024) Determination 2020* (Funding Plan 2020–2024).

Table 8 Objective 3 Resilience and sustainability, variation to performance information from *Corporate Plan 2023–24*

Key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*	Changes to key activity and performance measure wording made during the audit period	Other performance revisions made during the audit period
RS-01 Funding is committed to projects, programs and activities that aim to reduce emissions and help the agricultural industry transition to a net-zero economy.	RS-01 Delivery of projects, programs and activities that help the agricultural industry transition to a net-zero economy.	Targets and tolerances added. Measure type, methodology and data sources updated.
RS-02 The percentage of farms using sustainable management practices.	RS-02 Sustainable farming practices are funded through the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.	Measure type, target, tolerances, methodology and data sources updated.

Key activities and performance measures in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*	Changes to key activity and performance measure wording made during the audit period	Other performance revisions made during the audit period
RS-03 Each year, the Australian Government commits $100 million to impactful programs and initiatives to drive drought-resilience outcomes.	RS-03 Administer annual funding from the Future Drought Fund to build drought resilience in Australia's agricultural industry in accordance with the *Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020–2024) Determination 2020* (Funding Plan 2020–2024).	Not applicable.
RS-04 The proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks that are sustainable.	New performance measure.	New performance measure. Aligns to key activity 3.2.

Performance results

Summary of performance results

Table 9 provides a summary of results against our performance measures.

Table 9 Results against performance measures, 2023–24

Performance measure		2023–24 result
IG-01	Greater growth in average agricultural productivity (adjusted for climate and weather effects) for the past 10 years, compared to average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.	Achieved.
IG-02	Equal or reduced cost of levies administration compared with levies disbursed.	Achieved.
IG-03	Proportion of farm businesses making capital investments.	Not achieved.
IG-04	Encourage forestry industry investment in innovation.	Achieved.
IG-05	The department negotiates new and improved technical market access to international markets.	Achieved.
IG-06	The department negotiates to maintain technical market access to international markets when trade is threatened and restores trade where it has been lost.	A target was not set – refer to performance statement for commentary.
IG-07	Increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export (moving to paperless trade).	Achieved.
BI-01-01	Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to high-value cargo.	Achieved.
BI-01-02	Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to approved arrangements.	Achieved.
BI-01-03	Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to international travellers.	Achieved
BI-02	Biosecurity service standards are met.	Partially achieved.
BI-03	Risk assessments completed in the development of import policy and regulation of biosecurity risks on imported goods.	Achieved.
BI-04	Number of consignments of imported goods with khapra beetle detections is reduced as a result of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.	Achieved.
BI-05	Number and extent of biosecurity preparedness exercises completed.	Achieved.

Performance measure		2023–24 result
BI-06	Improve the management of biosecurity risk offshore by increasing assurance activities on pre-border biosecurity arrangements.	Achieved.
BI-07	Reduction in risk of African swine fever because of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.	Achieved.
BI-08	Undertake compliance and enforcement actions.	Achieved.
BI-09	Targeted public communication and engagement activities.	Achieved.
BI-10	The import permits service standard is met.	Not achieved.
RS-01	Delivery of projects, programs and activities that help the agricultural industry transition to a net-zero economy.	Achieved.
RS-02	Sustainable farming practices are funded through the Climate Smart Agriculture Program.	Partially achieved.
RS-03	Administer annual funding from the Future Drought Fund to build drought resilience in Australia's agricultural industry in accordance with the *Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020–2024) Determination 2020* (Funding Plan 2020–2024).	Achieved.
RS-04	The proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks that are sustainably managed.	Not achieved.

Objective 1 Industry growth

Support industry to grow towards a $100 billion agriculture, fisheries and forestry industry by 2030.

Key activity 1.1

Support industry productivity and growth through science, policy and partnerships.

Measure IG-01

IG-01	Greater growth in average agricultural productivity (adjusted for climate and weather effects) for the past 10 years, compared to average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.
Measure type	Effectiveness.
Target	Greater than 0% difference over past 10 years.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.
	Programs: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12.
Result	Achieved – agricultural productivity growth was 0.11 percentage points higher than the market sector growth rate.
Tolerances	Achieved: Average annual growth in the agricultural productivity (climate-adjusted) series exceeds average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.
	Partially achieved: Not applicable.
	Not achieved: Average annual growth in the agricultural productivity (climate-adjusted) series is lower than average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.

Context

Agricultural productivity measures technological advancement and its impact on industry progress. This is key to maintaining and increasing industry competitiveness and profitability.

We develop and implement policies and manage programs that enable primary producers to maintain and increase farm productivity. We support innovation in agriculture and agribusiness

management through co-investment with industry in the Rural Research and Development Corporations to benefit industry and regional communities. These corporations are a partnership between government and industry, allowing the Australian Government and primary producers to co-invest in research, development and extension. We also monitor and respond to emerging issues that affect industry and regional communities.

Securing an appropriate workforce is one of the biggest challenges facing agricultural industry. This involves a whole-of-government approach to invest in skills of Australian workers, create employment opportunities in the regions, support secure pathways for sourcing overseas workers, and ensure workers are protected. In 2023–24 we shaped policy, partnered with other government agencies and engaged with industries and unions to help address these challenges. For example, we:

- contributed to the Food Supply Chain Capacity Study under the Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) work program, to highlight the needs of the agricultural sector. We facilitated engagement between JSA and industry through the Agriculture Workforce Forum and with state and territory officials through the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee Labour Working Group.

- continued to engage with Skills Insight and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on the Ag Trade Apprenticeship Scoping Project.

- facilitated engagement for industry into the Employment White Paper and Migration Review through the Agriculture Workforce Working Group and Agriculture Workforce Forum.

Competition issues continue to impact agricultural producers and processors through the supply chain. We supported the minister to co-convene 2 separate rounds of industry roundtables with the independent reviewer, Dr Craig Emerson, as part of the Independent Review of the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct. These were crucial to ensure that agricultural producers and processors' views were heard directly by the reviewer. We also actively engaged in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission inquiry into Australia's supermarket sector and the Treasury Competition review.

Analysis

In the 10 years to 2023–24, agricultural productivity growth (adjusted for climate and weather effects) averaged 0.40% per year. This was higher than market sector productivity growth, which averaged 0.29% per year.

During the 10-year measurement period, variable climate affected Australia's agricultural industry. This included periods of drought across much of eastern Australia, as well as floods and more recent years of suitable climate and weather conditions for agricultural production.

Climate-adjusted productivity estimates measure Australia's broadacre industries, including farm businesses mainly involved in the production of crops for fodder or grain, beef, sheep, or a mix of cropping and livestock.

The market sector productivity measure included 16 market sector industries as defined by the Standard Economic Sector Classifications of Australia (SESCA) and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC).

Methodology and data sources

ABARES, our department's research arm, publishes climate-adjusted productivity statistics, which is generated through a machine learning microsimulation model and provides estimates of farm-level productivity under a range of climate scenarios. The process adjusts the productivity measure to account for climate and weather effects. The ABARES methodology used for generating climate-adjusted productivity has been published as a case study in a peer-reviewed academic journal Food Policy (vol. 102, July 2021).

We based market-sector productivity estimates on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates of industry multifactor productivity. Due to the time lag between measurement, publication of the productivity data, and end of financial year reporting timeframe, we used a forecast for the most recent year of data.

To calculate the agricultural productivity measure result for 2023–24, we used forecast data from 2022–23 and 2023–24. The market sector measure for 2023–24 was calculated using forecast data from 2023–24. The 2023–24 forecast for agricultural productivity and overall market sector productivity, were based on historical growth rates, and assume that productivity growth will be equal to the longer-term average.

Productivity is best measured over long periods because short-term fluctuations in measured productivity may be due to influences on the production process – for example, fluctuations in production costs and the sale of produce.

Caveats and disclosures

As the performance measure is based on productivity statistics provided by ABARES and ABS, the accuracy of the measure depends on the accuracy of the data published in their reports.

Past reporting of this performance measure used one year of forecast data for agricultural productivity. Due to the availability of data at the time of preparation of results, an additional year of forecast data was required with forecasts for agricultural productivity made for 2022–23 and for 2023–24. The same methodology was used to calculate the extra year of forecast data as previous years. We will recalculate the result once data is available.

In cases where we used a forecast because an actual observation did not exist, the forecast assumed that the actual result was consistent with the long-term average. This method likely reduces the potential accuracy of the estimates, but it ensures measurement consistency, increases transparency, and reduces subjective bias.

Productivity measures the efficiency with which inputs are used to generate outputs. Some elements of the production process that affect the productivity measure are not within businesses' control.

Climate-adjusted productivity estimates largely remove the effects of climate and weather variability, revealing the underlying productivity trend. However, some residual climate and weather impacts, such as price changes, may be present in the estimates. Temporary effects such as higher prices caused by drought conditions tend to impact short-term measures of productivity. In the long-term, these effects are likely to be small and difficult to measure.

The agricultural productivity result is for the Australian broadacre industries. Farm businesses engaged in other agricultural production, such as sugarcane farming, dairy farming and horticultural (fruit and vegetable) production were not included in the performance measure because climate adjusted productivity measures were not available for these industries.

Broadacre industries account for around two-thirds of Australia's agricultural production by total value and the majority of agricultural land use. The performance of the broadacre sector is the main driver of total agricultural industry productivity.

Variation from corporate plan

There was no variation from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* for this performance measure.

Measure IG-02

IG-02	Equal or reduced cost of levies administration compared with levies disbursed.
Measure type	Efficiency and regulatory.
Target	Cost is less than or equal to 1.2% of levies disbursed.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.
	Programs: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12.
Result	Achieved – cost was $4.65 million or 0.77% of levies disbursed.
Tolerances	Achieved: Levies administration cost is less than 1.2% of levies disbursed.
	Partially achieved: Not applicable.
	Not achieved: Levies administration cost is more than 1.2% of levies disbursed.

Context

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Australia's agricultural, fisheries and forestry industries to grow to $100 billion by 2030. The agricultural levies system is the partnership between government and industry that enables collective investment towards the 2030 target.

We are responsible for administering the agricultural levies system, and our role is underpinned by the levies legislative framework. We receive levies and levy return forms from collection agents, disburse the levies to recipient bodies and conduct compliance inspections. Our inspections help to build trust and ensure the integrity of the levy collection system. To maintain our core services and deliver efficiencies, we recover the costs of our administration and compliance activities from levy recipient bodies under the relevant levies legislation (such as the Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989).

In 2023–24 we collected more than 110 levies and charges on over 70 commodities across our industries. Across 18 levy recipient bodies, we disbursed $603.42 million in levies and charges and $470.29 million in Commonwealth matching payments. Levies collected and disbursed to recipient bodies allow primary industries to collectively invest in research and development, marketing, biosecurity activities, residue testing and biosecurity emergency responses. The levies also help industries drive growth, maintain competitiveness, manage risks and ensure their ongoing contribution to the Australian economy.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we use a business improvement program (BIP) to improve the capability and effectiveness of levy administration and regulation. Our operational procedures and guidelines are reviewed annually and updated under the BIP to support consistency across the country. We use inspection tip sheets as a reference for levies officers to perform record inspections and training. We conduct annual reviews of the national compliance program (NCP) to assess its ongoing effectiveness and to inform future compliance activities. Our review helps to improve compliance outcomes through more tailored compliance measures. We improve business outcomes through the early identification of efficiency gains and optimal resource allocation, with the aim of reducing compliance costs for industry.

2) Risk-based, and data-driven – we deliver a risk-based and data-driven NCP to support levy payers to comply with legislation and provide sufficient documentation. We undertake field visits and inspect transaction records of levy collection agents across the country. Levy collection agents are assigned a risk rating via our levies information management system which informs field visits. The NCP highlights levy collection agents who collect approximately 20% of levy revenue review. Approximately 500 inspections are completed annually.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we regularly liaise with key industry representatives to share information on developments and compliance. Our engagements help identify industry-wide trends and risks, generating more informed strategic compliance projects. Our projects are better able to target risk, inform industry on compliance, and increase staff awareness on levy benefits. Our engagement with levy payers and collection agents provides real-time stakeholder feedback. This is used to inform our approach to helping levy agents understand their obligations and encourage compliance.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we disbursed $603.42 million in levy revenue at a cost of $4.65 million. The cost was 0.77% of levies disbursed. This was a 23.34% increase in cost from 2022–23.

The NCP delivered positive outcomes against our operational compliance and targeted compliance assessment programs. We identified unpaid levies from new participants and recovered $0.26 million in revenue and made $1.47 million in levy adjustments. This figure comprises $0.60 million of levy overpayments and $0.87 million of levy underpayments.

Employee expenses are the biggest cost driver for levies administration costs. We saw our costs increase in 2023–24 as we commenced a new enterprise bargaining agreement and resumed recruitment activities to back-fill vacancies.

The less than 1.2% target benchmark – established in 2016–17 – was appropriate for 2023–24. We will review the relevancy of this benchmark in 2025–26, after the implementation of modernisation reforms to agricultural levies legislation.

Methodology and data sources

Our information systems – Activity Based Costing, Phoenix, and TechnologyOne – provided data on disbursements, levy rates, levy compliance, administration activities and costs. We combined this data to attribute collection costs to respective agricultural commodities.

Separate staff reconciled and reviewed the financial data between TechnologyOne and Phoenix to ensure completeness of the data and the accuracy of the cost recovery calculation.

Caveats and disclosures

Not all levy administration activities can be directly linked to specific agricultural commodities - for example, system administration and budgeting. The efficiency of the system to collect levies and all other necessary levy information from collection agents is dependent on participant compliance.

Variable climatic seasons can impact production levels and influence the amount of levy collected.

Variation from corporate plan

There was no variation from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* for this performance measure.

Measure IG-03

IG-03	Proportion of farm businesses making capital investments.
Measure type	Effectiveness.
Target	Increase in percentage of farm businesses making new capital investments compared to previous year (based on a 5-year moving average).
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.
	Programs: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12.
Result	Not achieved – in the 5 years to 2022–23, 53% of farm businesses made new capital investments. This was a 1.9 percentage decrease from the 54% of farm businesses making new capital investments reported in the 5 years to 2021–22.
Tolerances	Achieved: If the proportion of farms making new capital investments increases (based on annual reporting of a 5-year moving average).
	Partially achieved: Not applicable.
	Not achieved: If the proportion of farms making new capital investments decreases or is the same (based on annual reporting of a 5-year moving average).

Context

We develop and implement farm support policy and programs designed to assist farmers to prepare and respond to fluctuating income. These programs aim to support productivity and financial capacity of farm businesses, regardless of economic downturns and unfavourable climatic conditions. The programs included the Farm Management Deposit (FMD Scheme), concessional loans administered by the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC), Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS).

The productivity and growth of the Australian agricultural industry is largely dependent on farmers making capital investments to their farm businesses. Generally, the annual capital investment by farmers broadly fluctuates with changes in farm income. Farmers are more likely to make capital investments when they are confident or have positive expectations about the future. Examples of capital investments that lead to increased productivity include modernised equipment, the adoption of new technologies and/or improved infrastructure.

Analysis

In the 5 years to 2022–23, new capital investments were made by 53% of broadacre and dairy farms. The results showed a 1.9 percentage decrease in new capital investments over 5 years to 2021–22, resulting in this performance measure not being achieved.

The amount invested annually by farm businesses fluctuated broadly in line with movements in farm cash incomes. The result reflected declines in broadacre farm incomes in several years of the 5–year period, including 2019–20 (due to drought) and 2022–23 because of lower commodity prices and reduced crop production due to drier seasonal conditions in some regions. Our farm support policy and programs are delivered over the longer term. As the measure is strongly linked to incomes, fewer farms are able to make new investments when incomes fall. This means a likely reduction in take-up of some farm support programs that require farmer investment. The relatively small decline in the measure suggests policy and program settings should be monitored but is not significant enough to adjust settings.

Commonwealth-funded concessional loans, delivered through the RIC, aimed to support the long-term strength, resilience and profitability of eligible Australian farm businesses and related small businesses. We supported the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – in his role as a responsible minister for the RIC. This included a review of the operation of the Regional Investment Corporation Act 2018, as required by the Act. We provided secretariat support to the independent reviewer, Dr Wendy Craik AM, who made recommendations relevant to the scope of the RIC's activities and its governance arrangements after 30 June 2026. The review identified that RIC loans helped farmers recover from hardship and supported capital investments. Capital investments such as building on-farm dams and grain silos helped with drought preparedness and resilience within farm businesses.

The RFCS and FHA programs are largely hardship programs that use a dual case management and time-limit approach to drive structural adjustment (either by the person making sustainable improvements to their farm enterprise, or by exiting the industry). This includes supporting businesses to transition out of financial crisis, improving profitability, facilitating dignified exits from a business, and/or improving the financial wellbeing and resilience of farmers.

During the year the RFCS provided free and confidential financial counselling to 6,657 eligible farmers, fishers, foresters and small related businesses experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship. Of the 6,657 clients to receive support, 4,987 or 75%, were case managed under the Program.

Over 5,600 farmers and their partners received support through the FHA program in the 2023–24 financial year. Once granted, recipients also have access to up to $10,000 to pay for professional advice and/ or training to address their hardship. All decisions about how to approach changes are discussed with the person's case officer. This co-handling approach is designed to encourage recipients into taking positive actions.

The FMD Scheme aims to support business preparedness and financial risk management by helping primary producers manage their capital and fluctuating cash flow. The additional support created a financial buffer for the agricultural sector, resulting in increased resilience to economic downturns, prolonged unfavourable climatic events and natural disasters. The scheme supported farmers'

capacity to plan for and undertake capital investment by encouraging them to set aside cash reserves to draw on in low-income years.

At 30 June 2024 the 10-year rolling average of farm management deposit account holdings increased in real terms by 2.3% to $7.3 billion. We shared responsibility for administering the FMD Scheme with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). We had responsibility for the government's agricultural policy and the ATO held responsibility for tax compliance and taxation measures. Farm Management Deposits were one of a suite of taxation measures that primary producers could access for risk management and capital investment.

Methodology and data sources

We sourced data from the ABARES Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey and Australian Dairy Industry Survey. The use of a moving average across 5 years allows for annual fluctuations resulting from seasonal variations. New capital investments are measured over 5 years to identify fluctuation in confidence levels.

The annual survey data collected is based on results for the previous financial year. The lag time in survey data availability means that our 2023–24 data collection is based on survey results for 2022–23. Data collection occurred from July to December 2023 and preliminary results were known by May 2024. The results covered an estimated 65% of Australian farm businesses in 2022–23, which was the latest year for which ABARES farm survey data was available. The survey did not include farms in other agricultural industries such as horticultural, sugar cane and cotton growing. Relevant data on the remaining farm businesses in these industries was not available.

Caveats and disclosures

Changes in farm capital investment across Australia is one indicator of the effectiveness of our farm resilience policy and programs. Interest rates, input prices and commodity prices also influence farm businesses but remain outside our control.

The 10-year rolling average of farm management deposit account holdings is based on data reported to us by financial institutions that offer farm management deposits under the FMD Scheme.

In line with the method used in prior years, revisions to survey benchmarks provided by the ABS resulted in slight changes to survey weights applied at the farm level. Consequently, the final estimates of the proportion of farms making new capital investments (54%) was lower than the previous preliminary estimates (55%) over the 5 years to 2021–22. Such revisions are a normal part of the ABARES survey cycle which is dependent on benchmark data provided by the ABS.

Variation from corporate plan

There was no variation from the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* for this performance measure.

Measure IG-04

IG-04	Encourage forestry industry investment in innovation.
Measure type	Output.
Target	Deliver 30% of total grant program funding.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Achieved – grant expenditure of $30.54 million in 2023–24 exceeded the target of 30% ($30.22 million) of overall total grant program funding of $100.7 million.
Tolerances	Achieved: 70% to 100% of grants have met their milestone requirements to enable grant payments to be made. Partially achieved: 50% to 69% of grants have met their milestone requirements to enable grant payments to be made. Not achieved: 0% to 49% of grants have met their milestone requirements to enable grant payments to be made.

Context

The Accelerate Adoption of Wood Processing Innovation Program provides $100.72 million in grant funding to wood-processing businesses to adopt new and upgraded technologies. Funding of up to 40% of the total project cost is available over 4 years from 2022–23 to 2025–26. The funding enables privately-owned wood processors to invest in new and upgraded wood-processing facilities to increase production to meet ongoing demand.

Analysis

The program invests $100.72 million in grant funding across 4 years and leverages $199.99 million of co investment – amounting to a combined total investment of $300.71 million within the sector. In 2023–24 grant funding of $30.54 million (or 30.32%) was paid. Of this, grantees have spent $27.05 million in grant funding in implementing projects. When combined with expenditure from grantee co-investment, overall expenditure on project implementation was $73.44 million.

Given the existing supply chain issues, the slowing of the housing and construction markets, and the infancy of this program, we were satisfied with the progress grantees have made towards implementation. A small number of grantees were delayed by these challenges from meeting their milestone requirements, which resulted in the deferment of some grant payments to the next financial year.

The impact the program will have on individual businesses and the sector more broadly will be captured through an evaluation conducted post-completion of the grant program. Our focus is on the implementation of new and upgraded technologies within businesses.

Methodology and data sources

Results were based on our 6-monthly milestone reports. Grant expenditure data was drawn from payment notifications and reports from the Community Grants Hub, grant agreements, and our internal financial management system. Internal data records were updated after each payment period and verified using end-of-month reporting. Data was cross checked against grant agreements, milestone approval minutes and tracking spreadsheets.

Variation from corporate plan

The target for the measure is based on 30% of the total grant funding for the program. As the volume of grants funded under the program has reduced from $108.78 million to $100.72 million, the target has therefore reduced from $32.63 million to $30.22 million.

The 2023–24 target was originally based on 37 grants and a program expenditure of $108.78 million from 2022–23 to 2025–26. Our overall target of total grant funding was 30% ($32.63 million).

The withdrawal of 4 grantees from the program in 2023–24 reduced the total grant funding for the program. The program now has 33 approved grants with an overall committed program expenditure of $100.72 million. The revised target for 2023–24 (being 30% of the total grant funding) was $30.22 million.

The tolerances were amended to provide greater clarity as to how the target figure was derived.

Key activity 1.2

Maintain and expand international markets by certifying and regulating exports and negotiating new and improved market access.

Measure IG-05

IG-05	The department negotiates new and improved technical market access to international markets.
Measure type	Output.
Target	Each year, at least one new and one improved trade protocol is implemented by the department and made available to Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry exporters.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Achieved – 10 new export opportunities opened, and 44 improvements to market access.
Tolerances	Achieved: If at least one new and one improved market access protocol is made available.
	Partially achieved: Not applicable.
	Not achieved: If the department fails to deliver at least one new and one improved market access protocol.

Context

Australia's agricultural, fisheries, and forestry industries must have access to international markets to be able to grow to a value of $100 billion by 2030. Approximately 70% of production is exported to overseas markets, supporting food security around the world. In 2022–23, agriculture contributed 2.7% to Australia's gross domestic product (ABARES 2024).

We create new and improved market access through establishing technical (non-tariff) requirements for trade. These include treatment and testing protocols, labelling, and certification requirements. Once technical requirements are agreed, implementation is regulated under the *Export Control Act 2020* and associated legislation. New access describes establishing technical access for a specific commodity into a market for the first time, or where trade has not been available for 5 or more years. This includes negotiating new biosecurity protocols or other certification and assurance requirements with international trading partners. Improved market access occurs where we have negotiated revised protocols for market access that reduce the time, cost, or requirements for Australian exporters to access a given market.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we opened 10 new export opportunities against the target to grow market access by at least one new trade protocol or export opportunity. This included negotiating:

- new import conditions for Western Australian Hass avocados to Thailand – since access opened, $3.5 million worth of avocadoes (around 662 tonnes) have been exported

- new market access for Australian honey and edible apiculture products to be exported to Vietnam

- new market access for kangaroo meat and meat products to Taiwan.

We recorded 44 technical market access outcomes that improved access to overseas markets through reduced cost or regulatory requirements. This is a similar result to previous years though each improved outcome, or protocol, is unique to its circumstances and varies in size and complexity. This means the overall count of improvements is not directly comparable year-to-year. Examples from 2023–24 include:

- simplifying the certification process for wine exported to Thailand – a growth market for wine, with exports worth $59.9 million in 2023, up 55% on the previous 3-year average

- formalising and reducing regulatory burden for hides and skins exported to Brazil – in 2023 Australia exported over $1.2 million of skins and hides to Brazil, up 13% on the previous 3-year average

- streamlining access for processed animal proteins to the Republic of Korea – in implementing certificates to meet new importing country requirements, we removed the requirement for hardcopy letters, reducing time to export. We also negotiated greater flexibility of products and a wider range of suppliers able to export.

Methodology and data sources

We maintained internal registers of market access requests and the status of negotiations to identify finalised trade outcomes. Finalised outcomes are where conditions of trade have been agreed with overseas trading partners and made available to Australian exporters. Illustrative trade values were sourced from the ABS. The most recent complete year of data available at the time of analysis was the 2023 calendar year. Finalised outcomes were reviewed and included in a central register of trade outcomes maintained by our Trade and International Division. This ensured consistent use of definitions for new and improved market access achievements, and that achievements fell within our remit for market access, including:

- securing technical access to new markets for industry products by negotiating sanitary/phytosanitary protocols, certification and assurance requirements

- negotiating import requirements to maximise ease of access for exporters.

Contributions to free-trade-agreements and international standard setting bodies, such as the World Trade Organization or Food and Agriculture Organization, were out-of-scope for this measure.

Most new or improved market access outcomes had the agreed protocols published in the Manual of Importing Country Requirements (Micor) or as a Market Access Advice notice. A full list of

market access achievements may not be published if we assess there is a commercial-in-confidence or similar risk in sharing specific examples.

Caveats and disclosures

Unilateral decisions made by trading partners may impact our ability to negotiate technical market access. These may occur outside of our control – for example, punitive tariffs or non-tariff barriers implemented against a range of commodities including non-agricultural trade.

Uptake of export markets is also influenced by factors outside of our control. Whether exporters access all available markets is a commercial decision, influenced by:

- global prices, exchange rates and market conditions (supply and demand) and other factors such as external shocks to the global supply chain

- Australia's domestic market conditions, including climate, yield, and domestic demand, which determine how much product is available for export.

The number of commodities and international markets where access must be negotiated is dynamic. Novel products are developed, and international trading partnerships can morph and change, requiring new access conditions to be negotiated.

Variation from corporate plan

The measure wording was revised to reflect the work undertaken by our department more accurately. The measure type was re-categorised from an output and regulatory measure to an output measure. A target was introduced to affirm that competitive access to international markets should grow and improve over time. Tolerances were added to align with the target.

Measure IG-06

IG-06	The department negotiates to maintain technical market access to international markets when trade is threatened and restores trade where it has been lost.
Measure type	Output.
Target	Not applicable.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24*
Result	There were 29 instances of maintained market access and 5 instances of restored market access. These actions protected markets worth a potential $4.6 billion.
Tolerances	Not applicable.

Context

Australia's agricultural sector (agricultural, fisheries, and forestry industries) must have access to international markets to be able to grow to a value of $100 billion by 2030. We act to mitigate the impacts of trade disruptions to ensure agricultural, fisheries, and forestry exporters have stable, reliable, and economically viable access to existing overseas markets.

Our actions to maintain and restore market access are taken in response to trading partner changes and trade incidents as they arise. Maintained access is where trade was threatened or ceased, but the disruption was avoided or resolved within 6 months due to our remedial actions. This includes providing additional information and assurances or negotiating improved outcomes with international trading partners. Restored market access occurs where trade ceased for between

6 months and 5 years due to concerns related to technical market access, but we were able to negotiate to restore access. Technical market access describes non-tariff requirements for trade including treatment and testing protocols, labelling, and certification requirements.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we recorded 29 maintained market access achievements in the face of threats to trade. This included:

- Maintained access for canola to the European Union (EU) through advocating for recognition of the Australian canola industry's low-emissions credentials. Australia's canola exports to the EU were worth $2.1 billion in 2023.

- Revised veterinary health certificate for queen bees exported to Canada. This ensured ongoing trade following the changed *Varroa destructor* status in Australia. Conditions for package bees were also updated to recognise resumption of state freedom from small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) in Tasmania. Australia exported $2.9 million of live bees to Canada in 2023.

- Assuring Australia's animal health systems and market access for exports of meat and meat products to Taiwan – Australia's exports of beef, pigmeat, sheep and goatmeat to Taiwan were worth $419 million in 2023.

Access was restored to 5 markets where it was previously lost. Examples of restored market access included:

- Restoration for cooked and preserved meat exports to the United Kingdom (UK) – trade ceased on 1 May 2022 due to multiple changes to the certificate model required by the UK. We updated the Australian template health certificate to meet new requirements, allowing trade to recommence from 18 December 2023.

- Successfully negotiated reinstatement of market access for sheep meat to be exported to Brazil. Brazil changed certification requirements in 2020. We negotiated new certificate requirements, including a briefer attestation list based on Australia's disease status.

Methodology and data sources

We maintained internal registers of market access requests and the status of negotiations to identify finalised trade outcomes. Finalised outcomes are where conditions of trade have been agreed with overseas trading partners and made available to Australian exporters. Finalised outcomes were reviewed and included in a central register of trade outcomes maintained by our Trade and International Division. This ensured consistent use of definitions for maintained and restored market access achievements that fall within our remit as shown in Table 10. We assessed performance through reflecting on when and how these actions were undertaken to inform future actions to maintain and restore market access.

Commodities were identified using Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification (AHECC) codes. We used market and AHECC information to extract data from the International Trade in Goods dataset published by the ABS. Data was extracted as the export value for each impacted commodity in Australian dollars. For each achievement, the most recent and relevant complete year of data was used to indicate the size of the market. For maintained access, this was the 2023 calendar year which

was available at the time of analysis. For restored access, the calendar year preceding the loss of trade was used.

All restored market access outcomes will have agreed protocols published in the Micor or as a Market Access Advice notice. Evidence of maintained market access may not be published if a disruption to trade was avoided. A full list of market access achievements may not be published if there is a commercial-in-confidence or similar risk in sharing specific examples.

Table 10 Activities in-scope and out-of-scope for maintained and restored market access achievements

Activity	In-scope	Out-of-scope
Biosecurity incidents.	• Unconfirmed biosecurity incidents in Australia that have the potential to be resolved through our department providing additional information and assurances. • Confirmed biosecurity incidents in Australia where our actions have the potential to mitigate the impact on trade. Examples include ensuring areas of freedom are recognised allowing partial trade to continue.	• Confirmed, high-impact biosecurity incidents where no departmental activity, short of eradication, would be able to maintain trade.
Setting, meeting, and negotiating import requirements for products with trading partners.	• Responding to allegations of non-compliance for agricultural, fisheries and forestry industries product requirements from trading partners.	• Contributions to free trade agreements, and contributions to international standard-setting bodies (such as the World Trade Organization, or Food and Agriculture Organization).
Supporting exporters to meet new international standards specific to agricultural, fisheries and forestry trade.	• Maintaining trade by supporting Australian exporters to transition approaches and practices to meet new phased-in standards set by international or multilateral bodies.	• Retaliatory restrictions placed on a range of products – not exclusively to agricultural, fisheries and forestry industries. • A new standard introduced by an international standard-setting body – or other multilateral institution – that impacts all countries and has an immediate impact on agricultural, fisheries and forestry trade.

Caveats and disclosures

We did not set a target for this performance measure because the number and value of market access achievements are partially driven by external factors. Seasonal and market conditions can impact the value of trade, and actions by other governments can impact the number of achievements. This means that a higher or lower value is not necessarily indicative of our performance. We have updated our approach to measuring this work in our *Corporate Plan 2024–25*.

We used historical trade values as an indicator of the potential value of maintained and restored markets. Yearly variations caused by factors outside our control may also affect future trade values.

Uptake of export markets is influenced by factors outside of our control. Whether exporters access all available markets is a commercial decision, influenced by:

- global prices, exchange rates and market conditions (supply and demand) and other factors such as external shocks to the global supply chain

- Australia's domestic market conditions, including climate, yield, and domestic demand, which determine how much product is available for export.

AHECC codes were used as best practice to identify commodities, which allows consistency in reported export values. There are cases where commodities affected by achievements sit within broad AHECC codes. In these cases, it is not possible to identify what trade value was specifically associated with the commodity of interest. This may result in the potential value of the achievement being over estimated. The stated value of trade protected through market maintenance and restoration should be interpreted as the potential value of trade. This figure is provided to illustrate the potential size of trade only.

Variation from corporate plan
The measure wording was revised to reflect our work more accurately. The measure type was updated from an effectiveness and regulatory measure to an output measure.

Key activity 1.3
Streamline export regulations and compliance arrangements.

Measure IG-07

IG-07	Increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export (moving to paperless trade).
Measure type	Efficiency and regulatory.
Target	Plus 2.5% of the final 2022–23 eCert number (61,237).
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 1.13
Result	Achieved – 21.9% increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export (74,661 in 2023–24 compared with 61,237 in 2022–23).
Tolerances	Achieved: 100%. Partially achieved: 50% to 99%. Not achieved: 0% to 49%.

Context
We work with overseas governments (Competent Authorities) to implement paperless certification via electronic certification (eCert) exchanges for exports. This includes phytosanitary and sanitary certificates for exports of Australian food and agricultural products. The eCert is provided directly to the Competent Authority, providing assurances that we have completed the required regulatory process.

Moving to paperless trade via eCert provides efficiencies in applying changes to export certification when the importing Competent Authority requests changes to a certification template. For example, a certificate for meat exports to the EU that needs to be developed across all EU markets, and be

multi-lingual, requires 26 versions of the same template. With eCert, this can be reduced to 8, improving our response time to importing countries' certification changes.

With eCert, Australian goods may be cleared faster and be made available for sale sooner, reducing border clearance delays and processes, and creating the potential for increased exports of Australian goods.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – eCert replaces a manual, cumbersome process of issuing phytosanitary and sanitary certificates. It records export data in a central repository for real-time analysis, providing confidence about the authenticity of government-to-government certification by removing the need for processing paper-based certificates, which may require manual signatures and seals. Our trading partners gain confidence in the authenticity of arriving goods with the opportunity for food fraud to occur (through the manipulation of false certification) significantly reduced.

2) Risk-based, and data-driven – the data exchange via eCert helps to improve regulation and data-driven solutions to cross-border trade. Export data collected in our central repository can be analysed in real-time to make improvements to the processes and systems, when required.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we regularly collaborate and engage with government agencies within the overseas trading partner countries to implement eCerts for the export of food and agricultural products to and from Australia. By being transparent, this engagement allows us to continue to modernise our regulatory system through eCert, including successfully adopting any change of processes that are required, with minimal impact to trade.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we issued 74,661 electronic certificates for paperless trading across multiple commodities and importing countries. This is an increase of 21.9% from 61,237 electronic certificates issued in 2022–23. This was due to an increase in trade volume to paperless eCert markets that occurred during 2023–24, not through the creation of new paperless certification exchanges. This indicates that our approach to targeting traditional trading partners (who may also have an interest in digitisation) appearing to be successful, with paperless certification exchanges that are in place for exports to the United States of America, Japan and New Zealand as examples.

Methodology and data sources

Electronic certificates were taken from a report extracted from our Export Documentation System (EXDOC) and the New Export Documentation System (NEXDOC).

Caveats and disclosures

There are factors out of our control that may impact our ability to achieve the targets set, including:

- a lack of acceptance of eCert by some trading partners, or reciprocal arrangements

- time required to transition manual certification to NEXDOC and EXDOC

- inability to create electronic certificates for products that had elements originating from outside Australia

- any fluctuations of trade that occurs during the financial year

- increased market demand that requires additional ICT development, putting pressure on available resources.

Variation from corporate plan

The target was amended to clarify that the targeted increase was from 2022–23 when the baseline was established. Tolerances were also amended for 'partially achieved' and 'not achieved'.

The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 1 and 3. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Objective 2 Biosecurity

Strengthen our national biosecurity system to provide an appropriate level of protection to Australia's people, our environment and economy from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow.

Key activity 2.1

Plan and prepare for the management of biosecurity risk pre-border through policy, fit-for-purpose regulation, targeted intelligence and education, and mature biosecurity emergency preparedness.

Measure BI-03

BI-03	Risk assessments completed in the development of import policy and regulation of biosecurity risks on imported goods.
Measure type	Output and regulatory.
Target	Proportion of risk assessments completed within regulatory or target timeframes.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24*
Result	Achieved – 100% of risk assessments finalised within regulated or target timeframes (including 100% of the 15,701 import permit assessments and 100% of the 9 risk analyses).
Tolerances	Achieved: • Import permits: 100% of risk assessments finalised within regulated timeframes. • Risk analyses: 75% or more of risk analyses finalised within the target 24 months of announcement; 30 months regulated for Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis (BIRA). Partially achieved: • Import permits: 95% to 99% of risk assessments finalised within regulated timeframes. • Risk analyses: 50% to 75% of risk analyses finalised within the target 24 months of announcement; 30 months regulated for BIRA. Not achieved: • Import permits: Less than 95% of risk assessments finalised within regulated timeframes. • Risk analyses: Less than 50% of risk analyses finalised within the target 24 months of announcement; 30 months regulated for BIRA.

Context

We develop risk-based regulation and policies for the importation of goods into Australia to protect human, animal and plant health, and the environment from biosecurity pests and diseases. Our biosecurity risk assessments inform the import policy and regulatory requirements for imported goods that facilitate safe trade and reduce the likelihood of exotic pests and diseases entering and establishing in Australia. This benefits our import industries, domestic agriculture and production industries and consumers, and strengthens our biosecurity system.

This performance measure is different from BI-10 (the import permits service standard is met), which measures delivery of our biosecurity import permit service. In contrast, this measure is not about service delivery, it is measuring the quality of the risk assessment output which informs the development of import policy.

We included 2 types of biosecurity risk assessment in this performance measure that have legislated or target assessment timeframes. Risk analyses are formal risk assessments undertaken to inform published import policies. They detail the biosecurity risks and control measures required to import the goods into Australia or to release an exotic pest into Australia's environment. The process to complete a risk analysis involves delivering risk analysis milestones, concluding with a final report. Import permit assessments are undertaken to allow specific consideration of the biosecurity risks posed by the proposed import commodity. Import permit applications are subject to a case-by-case risk assessment to determine the import conditions necessary to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection. Table 11 provides legislated and target timeframes for risk analysis and import permit assessments.

Table 11 Legislated and target timeframes for finalised risk analysis and import permit assessments

Activity	Legislation/target	Timeframe to complete
Biosecurity Import Risk Analysis (BIRA).	*Biosecurity Act 2015*.	30 months.
Non-BIRA.	Published target.	24 months.
Import permit risk assessments for decision to grant or refuse a permit.	*Biosecurity Act 2015*.	6 months (123 business days).
	Biosecurity Regulation 2016.	

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we are committed to the improvement of import risk analysis to ensure import policies are fit for purpose, reflective of industry and pre-export risk management processes, and are science-based. We monitor and use import data to inform business improvements and regulatory reform.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we conduct a risk assessment to determine the appropriate import conditions required to reduce the biosecurity risk of imported goods. Risk assessments consider biosecurity risks, relevant import trade data and appropriate mitigation and/or management options.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we engage with stakeholders during import risk analysis to ensure risk assessments reflect contemporary science and risk management practices.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we completed 100% of risk assessments, of which:

- 100% of BIRA were completed within the 30-month legislated timeframe
    - one final BIRA report was published on our website
- 100% of non-BIRA were completed within the average 24-month target timeframe
    - 8 final non-BIRA reports were published on our website

- 100% of import permit assessments completed within 123-day legislated timeframe
  - 15,701 import permit assessments within the legislated assessment timeframe.

We achieved 100% of risk analysis completed within target and legislated timeframes this reporting year which exceeded our achieved expectation of 75%. Contributing factors include continued improvements to the efficiency of the analysis process, timely provision of required information from export trading partners, and a manageable level of unplanned significant risk analysis work. Delays in provision of necessary information and the amount and complexity of unplanned analysis work are factors that can affect delivery timeframes each year.

In addition to final risk analyses completed, risk analysis milestones were delivered within legislated and target timeframes that support the progression of ongoing risk analyses. These were:

- 6 announcements including preliminary assessment
- one provisional BIRA report
- one condition review issue paper
- one biological control agent risk analysis panel review
- 4 draft pest categorisation consultations with states and territories
- 3 country verification visits
- 8 draft risk analyses published on our website for formal comment
- one Scientific advisory group review
- 8 targeted stakeholder engagements to discuss risk analysis.

Appropriateness, trust, and satisfaction of the assessment and proposed policy conditions is measured through feedback provided via a public consultation period. Thirty-six stakeholder submissions were addressed and incorporated into final risk analysis, where relevant.

We use import monitoring data to measure import volumes and impact of regulatory conditions, pest approach rates, and border compliance in the cargo pathway. This provides data on the approach rate of biosecurity risk material and enables us to validate risk assessments and measure the effectiveness of import controls in managing biosecurity risk. Import data monitoring enables identification of anomalies, leading to updated risk assessments that drive improvement to risk-based regulatory settings.

The provision of import permits during 2023–24 enabled the importation of approximately 78,966 entries of cargo with declared import permits and was worth a total declared value of $13.9 billion to industry.

Of the entries imported with import permits during the year:

- 91.4% of entries subject to document assessment (78,449) passed
- 91.3% of entries subject to inspection (70,194) passed
- 98.3% of entries were free of biosecurity risk material.

Appropriateness, trust, and satisfaction of the assessment and required import conditions is measured via requests for formal internal review of permit decision or claims for Compensation for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) for permit assessment processes.

Of the import permits delivered during the year:

- 3 valid requests were assessed for formal internal review of permit decision

- there were no Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) applications for permit assessment process.

Methodology and data sources

We used the proportion of assessments completed within regulated or targeted timeframes as a measure of qualitative output of the risk assessments produced. We determined the number of completed risk assessments by identifying the total number of finalised risk analysis reports and import permits with completed item assessments extracted via the Biosecurity Import Conditions (BICON) system.

The proportion of activities completed within legislated or targeted timeframes was determined by analysing the elapsed assessment times.

The appropriateness and reliability of the assessments and policy conditions was measured through individual internal reviewable decision requests and CDDA applications, and submissions received during the draft import risk analysis comment period.

We determined the import volumes of goods with an import permit from our Agriculture Import Management System (AIMS).

We organised data sets to minimise the risk of data duplications and to exclude out-of-scope assessments.

Imported entry data was extracted on 18 July 2024 for entries finalised and cleared from biosecurity control between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

Caveats and disclosures

Risk assessments must be fit for purpose and can take considerable time to complete. Due to the small number of risk analyses completed within each financial year a larger tolerance range is considered acceptable. A smaller tolerance range is considered more appropriate for the large number of import permit assessments completed in the same year.

Our supporting evidence data on imported entries with permits is subject to the quality of information declared by brokers of imported goods.

Due to a limitation in our BICON system, permit assessments with assessment time recorded as zero in BICON have been excluded from the total data set.

Measuring the short-term effectiveness of risk assessments is challenging due to trade delays and complex and rapidly evolving biosecurity risks that can take time to emerge and/or be detected.

External factors, such as demand for alternative import measures and goods, emerging biosecurity risks, government action and evolving industry trends, and cooperation from stakeholders and applicants all influence numbers unpredictably. Analysis of risk assessment numbers alone is not indicative of our performance.

Variation from corporate plan

Targets and tolerances were added. Measure type updated from effectiveness to output. We removed risk assessments that did not have a legislative or target timeframe. As a result, data sources not used in the measure included:

- pest risk analyses, reviews, technical assessments and advice via finalised cases in our Threat and Risk Management (TRM) system and Biosecurity Assessment Recording System (BARS) reported via our Biosecurity Integrated Information System (BIIS)

- BICON cases established or updated to enhance effectiveness of import policy

- changes to intervention levels based on analyses of biosecurity risk reportable from our AIMS

- entries released from post-entry quarantine that were reported via the Post Entry Biosecurity System (PEBS).

The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* reflected our alignment with regulator best practice principles 1 and 2. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles in this measure.

Measure BI-04

BI-04	Number of consignments of imported goods with khapra beetle detections is reduced as a result of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Reduction in the number of consignments of imported goods where khapra beetle is detected compared with the 2020–21 baseline.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 2.2.
Result	Achieved – a reduction in or no interceptions across all 6 import pathways from the 2020–21 baseline data.
Tolerances	Achieved: The number of khapra beetle interceptions falls across all import pathways or remains at zero.
	Partially achieved: The number of khapra beetle interceptions falls for at least one import pathway but not for all import pathways.
	Not achieved: The number of khapra beetle interceptions does not fall in any import pathway.

Context

We are responsible for safeguarding Australia's favourable plant health status in order to maintain overseas market access and protect our economy and environment. We assess biosecurity risk associated with current new and emerging pests, including hitchhiker pests such as khapra beetle. The introduction and spread of khapra beetle in Australia would have severe economic consequences, particularly for Australia's agricultural and food production sectors.

During 2020 and 2021 we observed an increase in khapra beetle interceptions at the border. To minimise the risk of khapra beetle entering Australia, we introduced underlined urgent actions aligned with

regulatory best practice principles. In 2023–24 we continued to monitor the performance and effectiveness of the urgent actions.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – during the year we continued drafting a Pest Risk Analysis on khapra beetle. The draft report is expected to be released for public consultation in late 2024. This will review the urgent actions to ensure they are fit for purpose and technically justifiable and may lead to the refinement of existing measures or identify alternative measures to address the risk.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we conducted an initial risk assessment to identify actions that may reduce the risk of khapra beetle entering Australia. The risk assessment considered khapra beetle's biology, available treatment options (including data on operational effectiveness), interception data, likelihood of incursion and recommended actions for each pathway. The strength of the urgent actions was proportionate to the likelihood of khapra beetle entering on a pathway. We developed a compliance policy that articulated our approach to managing non-compliance on the pathways, including risk information to inform decision-making.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we engaged actively and extensively with domestic and international stakeholders, including trading partners, importers, domestic agriculture production peak industry bodies, treatment providers and the shipping industry. This engagement was to obtain feedback for ongoing improvements, provide timely notification of operational change, highlight their obligations and responsibilities, and encourage voluntary compliance.

Analysis

The number of consignments of imported goods where khapra beetle was detected reduced from a baseline of 19 in 2020–21 to 4 in 2021–22, 9 in 2022–23 and 2 in 2023–24. Our 2023–24 results shown in Table 12 indicate the number of khapra beetle detections reduced, or remained at zero, since the implementation of the urgent actions. Continued reduction in detections may also be attributed to positive engagement with our stakeholders on risk management.

Table 12 Number of consignments of imported goods with khapra beetle detections, by import pathway, 2020–21 to 2023–24

Category	Country of export	2020–21 baseline	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
High-risk plant products	Target-risk countries	6	0	4	1[a]
	Other-risk countries	2	1	0	0
Other-risk plant products	Target-risk countries	0	0	1	0
	Other-risk countries	0	0	2	0
Other goods (including empty sea containers)	Target-risk countries	0	0	1	0
	Other-risk countries	11	3	1	1[b]
All goods	**All countries**	**19**	**4**	**9**	**2**

a Detection of khapra beetle in beans carried by a traveller. **b** Detection of khapra beetle with grain residue on sea container floor.

Of the 2 detections in 2023–24:

- one was associated with a high-risk plant product, carried by a traveller arriving from a khapra beetle target-risk country – we continued to enforce our ban on the importation of high-risk plant products through clear communication and thorough inspection and screening of baggage

- one was associated with grain residues on the floor of a sea container from a country not known to have khapra beetle – to address this risk, we have engaged with the international community to lobby for improvements to hygiene standards and the design of sea containers.

Methodology and data sources

We established our baseline using the total annual number of khapra beetle interceptions prior to the introduction of urgent actions in 2020–21. Using this baseline, we compare annual detection numbers.

Our data sets were curated to remove duplicates.

We sourced khapra beetle interception data from our Incidents system, our Biosecurity Pest and Disease Notifications, AIMS, and our publicly available lists for high-risk plant-based products, target-risk countries and treatment certificates.

Caveats and disclosures

The likelihood of a pest entering Australia is often influenced by its pathway – for example, high-risk goods from high-risk countries are more likely to enter with khapra beetle. Our import conditions vary according to the country of export, type of goods and their mode of arrival into Australia. The application of these import conditions reduces the overall risk across all pathways to the same level, which is very low, to achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection. Therefore, weighting of detections by pathway(s) is not considered necessary.

Variation from corporate plan

Some import pathways had zero khapra beetle interceptions in the 2020–21 baseline. The tolerance description was therefore modified to show that the target would be achieved if the number of khapra beetle interceptions fell or remained at zero across all import pathways.

The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 2 and 3. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Measure BI-05

BI-05	Number and extent of biosecurity preparedness exercises completed.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	One preparedness exercise.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 2.1.
Result	Achieved – 2 exercises delivered.
Tolerances	Achieved: Exercises have been completed. Partially achieved: Exercises have commenced but not been completed. Not achieved: Exercises have neither commenced nor been completed.

Context

We have a range of responsibilities in crisis and emergency management. We are the lead agency for responding to and managing domestic plant and animal biosecurity crises under the *Australian Government Crisis Management Framework.* To ensure we maintain the capability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from biosecurity emergencies we deliver training programs, conduct exercises, and identify lessons to continually improve our systems.

Our work benefits all agricultural industry stakeholders and the wider community. Effective emergency management contributes to the protection of Australian agriculture, the environment, and the economy from all hazards, including biosecurity threats. Exercises are an essential component of emergency preparedness that use controlled, objective-driven activities to practice, test and evaluate our capabilities. We conduct exercises to ensure we can respond to biosecurity risks and other hazards in the most effective manner possible.

The extent (or level of complexity) will vary depending on the capability being tested for the exercise. For example, exercises that test a less developed capability are less complex than exercises that test a more developed capability. Exercises can be as simple as a planning group discussing a newly drafted emergency plan to validate its concepts, or as complex as a multi-agency simulation that tests response arrangements for a major emergency.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we regularly complete exercises to evaluate our capabilities and identify areas for improvement that inform changes to our emergency management arrangements. When these arrangements are used in emergency responses, or are re-exercised, we can measure the effectiveness of the improvement activities. This comprehensive approach builds stakeholder trust in our readiness for a biosecurity emergency.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we conduct exercises to improve our ability to respond to current and emerging risks. We use various data sources, such as preparedness reviews and intelligence on new threats, to prioritise which capabilities to exercise. Government inquiries and reports, such as the Joint Interagency Taskforce: Exotic Animal Disease Preparedness Report, inform how we focus our exercise activities to address identified risks.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we engage with Australian government agencies, jurisdictions, industries and other stakeholders. This improves our ability to effectively identify exercise priorities. The National Biosecurity Committee provides one such forum for engaging with state and territory counterparts and other delivery partners, like Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. Insights from such fora are instrumental in shaping exercise and professional development activities for a broad range of responders.

Analysis

This measure considers the number of biosecurity preparedness exercises completed in the 2023–24 reporting period, and the extent of those exercises. In 2023–24 we completed 2 preparedness exercises – Exercise Waterhole and Exercise Kringle.

Exercise Waterhole (September to November 2023) tested the preparedness of Australia's animal health laboratory network to respond to a large-scale emergency animal disease outbreak.

The exercise comprised a series of 4 activities involving multiple organisations. This included 2 in-person discussion-based workshops, a small-scale functional exercise with a single laboratory, and a 3-day national functional exercise involving government animal health laboratories in all jurisdictions. Simulated scenarios included an outbreak of lumpy skin disease affecting cattle across northern Australia; followed by a concurrent outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the southern states.

Actual outbreaks of HPAI occurred in May 2024 across multiple jurisdictions with response efforts demonstrating the effectiveness of recommendations identified through the exercise. For example, Exercise Waterhole recommended the use of the Laboratories for Emergency Animal Disease and Response (LEADDR) Emergency Committee to enhance communication and coordination between animal health laboratories. The LEADDR Emergency Committee met weekly during the initial response to the actual HPAI outbreak and assisted with communication and coordination between laboratories.

Exercise Kringle (December 2023) was designed to strengthen the readiness of departmental senior officials to fulfill their roles and responsibilities during an incident. It comprised a single, hypothetical discussion exercise involving internal participants. This included familiarisation with our plans for managing complex events.

The exercise provided an opportunity for senior officials to practice the initial stages of an emergency animal disease response, which has since been applied to several situations. For example, a Response Coordination Group and Incident Management Team were established to coordinate the departmental response to the recent outbreaks of HPAI using the arrangements explored in Exercise Kringle.

Methodology and data sources
We maintained a register of all recorded exercise activities, counted the number of exercises undertaken each year, and described the extent of each activity using the 'exercise style' methodology in the Australian Disaster Resilience *Managing Exercises Handbook*.

Records of preparedness exercises were stored electronically, and included scoping and concept documents, plans, instructions, evaluations and reports.

Variation from corporate plan
The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 1 and 3. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Measure BI-06

BI-06	Improve the management of biosecurity risk offshore by increasing assurance activities on pre-border biosecurity arrangements.
Measure type	Output and regulatory.
Target	Perform 60 treatment provider compliance management activities in line with our offshore treatment assurance schemes.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Achieved – 60 treatment provider compliance management activities were conducted.
Tolerances	Achieved: 60 or more treatment provider compliance management activities conducted.
	Partially achieved: Between 50 and 60 treatment provider compliance management activities conducted.
	Not achieved: Less than 50 treatment provider compliance management activities conducted.

Context

We build and foster relationships with trading partners to strengthen regional and global biosecurity frameworks and practices. Our collaboration with overseas governments and industry helps us to effectively manage biosecurity risks offshore and enhances Australia's status as a trade partner of choice.

We establish and administer offshore arrangements (government-to-government and/or government-to-industry) for the biosecurity treatment of a range of goods before they are exported to Australia. Offshore biosecurity treatment assurance schemes are conducted in partnership with treatment providers and foreign governments. Assurance data drives our intelligence-led activities and profiling, and further enables the early detection of non-compliance in managing biosecurity risks from entering Australia.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we conduct internal and external reviews to verify compliance with regulatory requirements and improve processes which in turn builds trust with stakeholders that we are an up-to-date, flexible, agile, and transparent regulator.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – global and transnational biosecurity risks, identified from our data, drive our regulatory focus to ensure efforts are directed at high-risk import pathways.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we build and foster relationships with international authorities to manage biosecurity risks offshore and domestically through Federal, state and local government authorities by sharing information and building counterparts' capacity to improve regulatory systems and oversight.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we performed 60 treatment provider compliance management activities, including documentary assessment and remote and physical audits, in line with our offshore treatment assurance schemes, which includes the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme, Offshore Brown Marmorated Stink Bug Treatment Provider Scheme, Offshore Irradiation Treatment Providers Scheme and Ethylene Oxide Offshore Treatment Providers Scheme.

We identified patterns and risks via system data and used this to inform decisions and priorities. The data also contributed to the development of intelligence-led targeting strategies.

Methodology and data sources

We determined our target number by assessing the relevant scheme requirements. The availability of registered treatment providers was also considered. See pre-border biosecurity arrangements and biosecurity treatment providers for further information.

Our Agricultural Information Management System (AIMS) provided data for completed activities, inspections and documentary assessment. Our Power Apps database captured data on treatment providers and verification. To identify indicators of non-compliance we analysed data in Power BI.

A completed activity produced a pass or fail result.

Caveats and disclosures

The specific compliance verification activities for a given provider are variable. Pathway risk, treatment type and pests of concern all impact activities. Compliance verification activities may include inspection, documentary assessment and audit.

Variation from corporate plan

The measure wording, measure type, targets and tolerances have been adjusted to be more meaningful and more reflective of the goal of the measure. For accuracy, we moved the measure to key activity 2.1.

Measure BI-09

BI-09	Targeted public communication and engagement activities.
Measure type	Output.
Target	Conduct at least 2 targeted biosecurity awareness campaigns per financial year.
Source	Not applicable.
Result	Achieved – 2 biosecurity awareness campaigns were completed – international travellers and online shopping.
Tolerances	Achieved: At least two targeted campaigns (paid or unpaid) are conducted per year.
	Partially achieved: One targeted campaign (paid or unpaid) is conducted per year.
	Not achieved: No targeted campaigns are conducted.

Context

The most effective way of managing biosecurity risk to Australia is to prevent it arriving in the first place. All Australians and people travelling to Australia, or sending material via post or cargo, have a role to play in managing biosecurity risk. Communication and engagement activities are an important element in helping Australians understand biosecurity risks, their role in preventing pests and diseases entering the country, and what to do if they suspect a biosecurity risk.

We deliver a range of public communication and engagement activities to enhance awareness of Australia's biosecurity requirements. Increasing public awareness is designed to reduce biosecurity risks entering Australia.

Well-informed audiences are key contributors to a shared biosecurity culture, where everyone understands its importance and plays their part to support a strong national biosecurity system.

Biosecurity campaigns provide a solid foundation for enhancing engagement and awareness of Australia's biosecurity requirements and educating audiences on their role in protecting the country from exotic pests and diseases.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we conducted 2 biosecurity awareness campaigns:

- international travellers and biosecurity

- online shopping.

The international travellers and biosecurity campaign was aimed at raising awareness of Australia's biosecurity requirements and promoting compliance among travellers arriving in Australia. The primary objective was to inform and educate returning Australian travellers, international students, and international passengers travelling to Australia, including culturally and linguistically diverse audiences, about biosecurity risks and compliance requirements. The campaign was designed to reduce the risk of biosecurity risk material entering the country through the traveller pathway.

The online shopping campaign was aimed at promoting compliance with Australia's biosecurity laws when ordering or sending products from overseas. It aimed to educate target audiences about the country's biosecurity requirements and aimed to drive traffic to our website for online-shopping. The campaign was designed to engage with online shoppers about the measures they need to take in meeting Australia's biosecurity requirements to reduce biosecurity risks from entering the country through the international mail pathway.

The campaigns promoted important biosecurity messages using various channels, to deliver against the objective.

Methodology and data sources

The measure required the number of biosecurity awareness campaigns to be counted. A 'campaign' is considered to be a targeted program of messages relating to biosecurity awareness with a specific aim to inform and educate a target audience and ideally change behaviour.

For this measure a campaign can be paid or unpaid. An unpaid campaign uses our own existing channels to disseminate the key messages – for example, our social media accounts. A paid campaign involves engaging with the Federal government approved Master Media Agency, Universal McCann, and disseminating the key messages that align with the Australian Government Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns. Universal McCann was engaged to deliver the 2 paid advertising campaigns – 'international traveller' and 'biosecurity and online shopping'.

Variation from corporate plan

This measure was not in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*. It was added to the 2023–24 annual performance statements to demonstrate the importance of communication and engagement activities in contributing to enhanced awareness of Australia's biosecurity requirements.

Measure BI-10

BI-10	The import permits service standard is met.
Measure type	Output and regulatory.
Target	Service standard is achieved.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24* as part of BI-02.
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Program: 2.1.
Result	Not achieved – 49% of import permit applications processed with a decision made within 20 business days.
Tolerances	Achieved: 90% or more import permit applications are processed, and a decision made within 20 business days.
	Partially achieved: 50% to 89% of import permit applications are processed, and a decision made within 20 business days.
	Not achieved: Less than 50% of import permit applications are processed and a decision made within 20 business days.

Context

We safeguard Australia's animal and plant health status to achieve, maintain and expand access to overseas markets while also protecting Australian agriculture, the economy and environment.

The assessment and decision-making associated with import permits is critical to safeguarding Australia's animal and plant health status because it allows for assessment and, if applicable, issuance of an import permit that sets out the conditions applicable to managing the biosecurity risks associated with goods within Australia's appropriate level of protection.

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and *Biosecurity Regulation 2016*, we have a maximum of 6 months (123 business days) to assess a permit application and decide whether to grant or refuse a permit. Our client service charter and client service standard sets out what clients can expect when interacting with our department.

We have an established service standard of 90% of import permit applications processed and a decision made within 20 business days, recognising that the regulatory service we provide is integral to our clients' needs and biosecurity management. The service standard also provides that import permit applications may take longer to process if the application is complex, the information provided is incomplete or it is a novel product. In the instance where the information provided is incomplete, the permit application will be put on hold, essentially stopping the assessment clock, until the requested information is received. By placing applications on hold until requested information is received, we ensure that the time being measured reflects our active assessment time and not time while an application is in the hands of the applicant.

This measure assesses our performance against the import permit service standard for the issuance of permits through BICON to manage biosecurity risk.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – client service standards allow our department and industry to monitor how responsive, efficient, and effective we are in delivering our biosecurity

regulatory responsibilities. We utilise data from service standards to improve how we deliver our regulatory services to the importing community, using data insights to support and drive improved outcomes. For example, if analysis of the data identifies that a specific commodity is outside of the overall import permit service standard, more resources can be directed to it.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we leverage data from monitoring client service standards to deliver our biosecurity regulatory responsibilities. This service standard allows us to monitor and plan for any cyclical patterns in import permit applications that may affect our regulatory service performance.

3) Collaboration and engagement – our standards identify our clients' obligations and describe how individuals and businesses can expect us to process requests for information or services that we provide. The BICON import permit web page provides extensive information on import permit processes that includes timeframes for assessing applications and the applicant's legislative rights to seek a review of a decision.

Analysis

In 2023–24 49% of import permits issued by our department met the service standard, against the service standard target of 90% (Table 13), resulting in the performance measure not being met.

Table 13 Biosecurity import permit service standard results, 2023–24

Service standard	Target %	Jul 23 %	Aug 23 %	Sep 23 %	Oct 23 %	Nov 23 %	Dec 23 %	Jan 24 %	Feb 24 %	Mar 24 %	Apr 24 %	May 24 %	Jun 24 %	2023–24 %
Import permits	90	50	58	58	49	41	47	50	49	45	52	45	43	49

We have investigated and further identified several factors that affect our ability to meet the import permit service standard, including complexity of assessments, system limitations and major policy change. These factors are further described below.

Complexity of assessments

Assessments may take longer if the application needs a technical assessment, incomplete or incorrect information is provided, more information is required to continue the assessment, or the commodity is a novel product. Many permit assessments are considered complex and technical because the assessment includes review of laboratory reports, manufacture processes, veterinary reports and official government certification.

The complex permit applications are categorised as 'non-standard goods' and they attract a higher fee for service in recognition of the longer assessment time required. Import applications for non-standard goods may be prepared and submitted by a range of stakeholders, including pet owners, brokers, and importers, of which some may have limited or no experience interacting with BICON and the logistics associated with the international movement of goods. As a result, assessments of non-standard goods may require multiple requests for information from applicants, importers, manufacturers, preparing veterinarians and the exporting government to ensure all information is available to fully complete an assessment. Although the assessment 'clock' is paused while awaiting a response to a request for information, the back-and-forth nature of information requests can translate into additional associated time and pressure on our resources to review and

assess/reassess information in a timely manner. This can add to the time an assessment takes and impacts the ability to consistently achieve the 20-business-day service standard for non-standard goods. We are reviewing our methodology for future reporting to separate assessment of standard from non-standard goods to better understand the impact of the 2 categories on our overall achievement of the import permit service standard.

System limitations

BICON houses import conditions for over 20,000 animal, plant, mineral and biological products. Content in BICON is authored to ensure compliance with both system and legislative requirements. This, in addition to the conditions themselves being complex, results in content that can be difficult to comprehend for inexperienced users. To assist users with understanding the conditions and import process we published supporting content on our website – for example, step-by-step guides to assist cat and dog importers. We are taking steps to improve readability and access to easy-to-understand information through a website improvement project and consideration of artificial intelligence tools.

Major policy change

One of the key factors for not achieving the stated target was the implementation of a major policy change in March 2023 affecting cat and dog permits. The policy change was in response to the increased rabies risk posed by the increasing commercialisation of trade and identification of fraud in global companion animal movements. This resulted in permit assessment times for this commodity increasing significantly, and as this commodity represented 48% of all permits issued in 2023–24, it contributed significantly to the target not being achieved.

Certainty in the identification of an imported animal is central to Australia's rabies risk management as it provides the link between the animal that arrives in Australia and the laboratory tests, veterinary preparations and government certification that demonstrate compliance with our import conditions. The policy change included strengthening animal identification, residency and post-entry quarantine measures, and recognising an adequate rabies neutralising titre test (RNATT) laboratory report for no longer than 12 months. This change requires additional steps to be taken by importers and exporting governments. Evidence to support the actions taken to complete these steps must be presented as part of the permit application. We are taking steps to streamline the policy requirements by working with exporting governments and pet transport companies to improve processes and identify efficiencies, such as negotiating health certification specific to exporting countries.

Methodology and data sources

The calculation for the result was based on the total number of import permits processed. Import permit data was stored in our Biosecurity Analytics Centre's T1 Import BICON database. Data was obtained via SQL query of information in the database, and then loaded into Excel.

The calculation to measure whether the time elapsed met the service standard was completed in Microsoft Excel. Time elapsed results were verified to align with timeframe results in BICON.

Caveats and disclosures

Permit applications may take longer if the application for an import permit is complex, the information provided is incomplete or it is a novel product. Whilst the service standard provides for

complex applications taking longer, we do not currently separate reporting and analysis based on the complexity of the assessment. In addition, we have commenced a verification activity on BICON's pause functionality to ensure it is working appropriately. The service standard and methodology are also being revised for future inclusion and recognition of permit complexity.

Variation from corporate plan

We extracted the import permit service standard from BI-02 in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* to provide a result for this service standard alone. Performance measure BI-02 reports against other biosecurity service standards.

Key activity 2.2

Detect, monitor and mitigate biosecurity risk at the border though intelligence-informed targeting, technology-supported inspections and efficient detection methods.

Performance measure BI-01

The 3 elements of this measure, which relate to rates of non-compliance with regulations, apply to:

- high-value cargo (BI-01-01)

- approved arrangements (BI-01-02)

- international travellers (BI-01-03).

Measure BI-01-01

BI-01-01	Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to high-value cargo.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Reduction in high-value cargo non-compliance rate.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.
	Programs: 2.1.
Result	Achieved – reduction in non-compliance rate of 0.08% (1.25% in 2023–24 compared with 1.33% in 2021–22).
Tolerances	Achieved: Reduction in high-value cargo non-compliance rate compared with 2021–22.
	Partially achieved: No change in high-value cargo non-compliance rate compared with 2021–22.
	Not achieved: Increase in high-value cargo non-compliance rate compared with 2021–22.

Context

High-value cargo – with a high monetary value such as cars, industrial equipment or pharmaceutical products – is cargo imported into Australia on a full import declaration (FID). We work with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to review high-value cargo imports for biosecurity risks. For example, goods being imported from a country known to harbour pests or diseases regulated in Australia under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

We deliver biosecurity safeguards through the development and implementation of appropriate policies, procedures, arrangements and regulatory processes. We closely monitor supply chains to ensure they meet Australian biosecurity requirements and respond to non-compliance proportionately.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we continue to review and monitor pathway profiles in DHA's Integrated Cargo System (ICS) to ensure profiles are aligned to the risk they are intended to manage.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we utilise data evidence in the ICS and departmental systems to make decisions based on risk and respond to non-compliance appropriately.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we collaborate with DHA and other regulators for appropriate management of risks. This collaboration includes information sharing and tactical response to identify non-compliance, and enhancements to broader systems for improved border capabilities.

Analysis

Table 14 shows the year-on-year reduction in non-compliance in high-value cargo imported over the last 3 years, indicating that through the development and implementation of appropriate policies, procedures, arrangements and regulatory processes worked effectively within the biosecurity system. In turn, the high-value cargo non-compliance rate fell by 0.08% compared with the 2021–22 baseline of 1.33%.

Table 14 Non-compliance rate of high-value cargo imported into Australia, 2021–22 to 2023–24

Item	Unit	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Non-compliance rate of all high-value cargo imported into Australia	%	1.33	1.29	1.25
Number of non-compliant full import declarations	no.	56,482	54,037	52,631
Total number of full import declarations	no.	4,237,475	4,188,380	4,223,931

Methodology and data sources

We determined the non-compliance rate using:

- data from DHA's ICS – the ICS provided the volume of high-value cargo full import declarations

- data from AIMS – AIMS categorised biosecurity direction results into compliance and non-compliance with import requirements

- data on detection of pests or diseases from our Incidents Client system

- reference data maintained by Biosecurity Analytics Centre – maps direction results to either compliant or non-compliant outcomes.

Post-intervention compliance was calculated as the proportion of FIDs that were non-compliant out of the total number of FIDs.

Caveats and disclosures

Compliance with regulation was subject to factors partly within our control, including individuals or businesses either being unaware of or not understanding their obligations, or taking actions that are not compliant with our regulatory requirements.

Instances of non-compliance were affected by several factors, including trends in import types and volumes, changes in supply chains, and environmental factors such as seasonal pests. The quality of available data affects the extent to which we can comprehensively assess the effectiveness of our regulatory arrangements. This includes data from external sources such as the ICS, where full visibility of all cargo data is not currently available to our department.

Variation from corporate plan

Tolerances were amended to reflect a 2021–22 baseline. For accuracy, we moved the measure to key activity 2.2.

The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 1 and 3. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Measure BI-01-02

BI-01-02	Reduced levels of non-compliance with regulations that apply to approved arrangements.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Reduction in non-compliance rate for approved arrangements.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 2.1.
Result	Achieved – 0.29% reduction in the rate of failed audits (5.59% in 2023–24 compared with 5.88% in 2022–23). A reduction in the overall non-compliance rate (including audits that did not fail but where non-compliance was detected) of 8.31% over the same period (37.36% in 2023–24 compared with 45.67% in 2022–23).
Tolerances	Achieved: Reduction in approved arrangement non-compliance rate compared with 2022–23. Partially achieved: No change in approved arrangement non-compliance rate compared with 2022– 23. Not achieved: Increase in approved arrangement non-compliance rate compared with 2022–23.

Context

We establish and maintain approved arrangements under section 7 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. These arrangements enable us to deliver against legislative and regulatory responsibilities and help us manage biosecurity risks posed by goods imported into Australia – this enhances Australia's status as a trade partner of choice. These arrangements permit biosecurity industry participants to perform certain biosecurity activities in accordance with departmental requirements. These arrangements are science-based and established in conjunction with our Animal, Plant and Cargo technical areas responsible for risk assessment.

We develop audit policies, approved arrangement conditions and instructional material (processes) developed to support the approved arrangement system to manage potential biosecurity risks. This enables biosecurity industry participants to perform biosecurity activities in response to increasing trade volumes to minimise the entry and establishment of exotic pests and diseases in Australia and streamline border clearance of imported goods.

We audit approved arrangements, in line with our policies related to audit frequency and prioritisation, to assess compliance with arrangement conditions. Compliance is potentially affected by factors such as entity behaviour, import types and volumes, changes in supply chains, and

environmental factors such as seasonal pests. Maintaining a high level of compliance means that approved arrangements continue to meet their obligations.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we ensure arrangements, regulatory policy and legislation remain fit for purpose through engagement with industry. Approved arrangement class conditions are subject to periodic review and revision in collaboration with internal stakeholders and industry operators, as required, to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose for the management of biosecurity risk.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – our risk-based approach to auditing Approved Arrangements was underpinned and informed by compliance data. We focused our efforts against known biosecurity risk by prioritising additional compliance audits for biosecurity industry participants that had a recent history of serious non-compliance. In 2023–24, the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA) commenced a project to determine a quantitative relationship between the audit rate and compliance. This work could potentially provide a foundation for developing audit rate that are more data-driven. A report on the CEBRA project is expected in late 2024.

3) Collaboration and engagement – Our engagement with industry, through industry notices and forums including regular meetings with industry peak body groups, allows for collaboration on proposed changes to the arrangements, regulatory policy and legislation. For example, in May and June 2024, we conducted face-to-face presentations nationally to industry stakeholders in conjunction with Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Freight and Trade Alliance. The forums provided industry, and the respective peak body, with the opportunity to directly engage with our staff on proposed changes to approved arrangement class conditions. This engagement also provided industry with further opportunity to discuss their approved arrangement queries in general.

Analysis

Table 15 shows decreases in the percentage of failed audits and audits passed with non-conformities detected. A reduction in non-compliance can reflect the effectiveness, clarity, acceptance, and adaptability of policies, all of which contribute to their overall fitness for purpose. For example, a reduction in non-compliance may indicate that stakeholders understand the policies better, suggesting that the policies are adequately designed and implemented. When industry complies, it can reflect a sense of engagement and acceptance. A decrease may also suggest that audit policies are effective and structured in a way that encourages compliance rather than relying solely on punitive measures. The reduction may also point to a system of feedback that allows policies and conditions to adapt and improve based on prior non-compliance issues.

Table 15 Approved arrangements audit results, 2022–23 to 2023–24

Item	Unit	2022–23	2023–24	Difference
Approved arrangements	no.	3,241	3,183	-58
Approved arrangements audited	no.	1,366	1,267	-99
Pass	%	53.88	62.57	+8.69

Item	Unit	2022–23	2023–24	Difference
Pass with non-conformities	%	39.79	31.77	-8.02
Total pass	%	93.67	94.27	+0.6
Total fail	%	5.88	5.59	-0.29
Pending	%	0.45	0.07	-0.38

Methodology and data sources

We recorded individual audit results in our Quarantine Premises Register (QPR) system. This system automated the pass or fail decision based on the number and severity of non-compliance.

We calculated the total results from a QPR report. We applied audit and arrangement type filters and categorised the data. We repeated the reports to ensure we correctly applied the filters.

Caveats and disclosures

Audit information was manually entered into the QPR which may result in typographical errors in terms of non-compliances, audit type and audit dates.

A very low number of audits remained pending at 30 June 2024 where the audit result was not determined. These few audits that remained pending had a negligible effect on the calculated result.

Audit information from QPR is fed into a data model which interfaces with Microsoft Power BI. The system workflow is set up such that data is uploaded into Power BI once per day (at midnight). This means we cannot report part-way through the day to capture data entered on that same day.

Variation from corporate plan

Tolerances were updated for greater clarity. For accuracy we moved the measure to key activity 2.2. The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 1 and 3. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Measure BI-01-03

BI-01-03	Rates of non-compliance with regulations that apply to international travellers.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Reduction in post-intervention non-compliance rate for international travellers.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 2.1.
Result	Achieved: Decrease in non-compliance rate of 0.49 percentage points (post-intervention non-compliance rate was 3.18% in 2023–24 compared with 3.67% in 2022–23).
Tolerances	Achieved: Reduction in post-intervention non-compliance rate for international travellers compared with the previous year. Partially achieved: No change in post-intervention non-compliance for international travellers compared with the previous year. Not achieved: Increase in post-intervention non-compliance rate for international travellers compared with the previous year.

Context

We regulate the movement of goods into Australia through assessing and managing biosecurity risks associated with travellers and their baggage, consistent with Australia's appropriate level of protection.

Post-intervention non-compliance in the traveller pathway is the percentage of travellers entering Australia, who are carrying goods that do not meet import conditions after border processes are completed.

We used a multi-layered approach to promote compliance and to detect non-compliance at the border, including through mandatory traveller declaration on the Incoming Passenger Card, evidence-based targeting, real-time assessments, and various screening techniques – X-ray and detector dog screening of traveller baggage, assessment and inspection of baggage and goods in the secondary examination area.

Our biosecurity officers are trained and assessed in baggage inspection, questioning techniques, and X-ray screening. Our detector dogs are trained and assessed in detecting target goods. This provides assurance that detection tools are being deployed as intended.

Regulatory alignment

This measure is aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we successfully implemented the Traveller and Mail System (TAMS) – a new digital solution – for improvements to our data capability, and ability to manage biosecurity risks at the border efficiently and effectively. TAMS records outcomes of assessments, inspections and goods and non-compliance activities (replacing the Mail and Passenger System (MAPS)), and introduced enhanced capability including decision support and up-front data for real-time risk assessments. We continued to focus on data quality auditing, error identification, and automated reporting from TAMS following implementation. We have engaged our Biosecurity Analytics Centre to integrate the TAMS and MAPS data models and build preliminary data summary reports. Our Biosecurity Operation Division's Data Centre will assist with visualising the reports with an initial focus on data quality and KPI reporting. Whilst the reports are in development, we manually audited TAMS records with results used to identify training, communication and process improvement needs. MAPS data was not included in this manual audit process.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we identify high-risk travellers for biosecurity screening through data analysis of intervention outcomes. The data is used to determine biosecurity profiles, identify and flag high-risk travellers for biosecurity screening, and underpins our intervention targeting approach. For example, in addition to real-time risk assessments, we analyse the data using a methodology provided by CEBRA. This methodology enables us to target travellers that are more likely to bring in undeclared high-risk goods. These travellers undergo screening or inspection, allowing resources to be directed towards screening these higher risk travellers.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we engage travellers directly through targeted messaging about biosecurity requirements including: flyers on arrival and departure from Indonesia for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), communication products to overseas student organisations and special event coordinators, and video and audio announcements on arriving aircraft and signage

at all Australian airports. We collaborate with ABF to maintain border security while reducing touchpoints for compliant travellers, share resources, and progress work towards more seamless travel through new technology adoption.

Analysis

The post-intervention non-compliance rate for 2023–24 was 3.18%. It represents a small decrease from the 2022–23 baseline figure of 3.67% and shows the effectiveness of our controls to mitigate biosecurity risks. Despite emerging global biosecurity risks, and a constantly changing risk environment with increasing traveller volumes, new flights, new airports, and the global spread of pests and diseases, we continued to detect and manage high levels of biosecurity risk material at the border. We continued to ensure the vast majority of arriving international travellers are entering Australia without any biosecurity risk material in line with Australia's appropriate level of protection.

Data collected was used to target our interventions to the highest risk and deploy our detector dogs and other detection capabilities to detect the highest risk products.

Methodology and data sources

We continued to use the methodology for determining post-intervention compliance, developed by CEBRA at the University of Melbourne. From this result we determined the post-intervention non-compliance rate, which is equivalent to 100% minus the compliance rate.

We undertake surveys by randomly selecting travellers and inspecting their baggage after they have passed through all border control measures. This survey, known as an 'end-point survey', is used to measure post-intervention compliance and understand the effectiveness of biosecurity screening and interventions applied to travellers at the border. During 2023–24 we selected a proportion of travellers – approximately 50,000 – who were screened or re-screened to check for any biosecurity goods not detected through our regular clearance processes. The data captured in the end-point survey was analysed using the CEBRA methodology to determine the proportion of travellers cleared at the border who had no biosecurity risk goods, or whose goods met import conditions (post-intervention compliance), which enabled us to measure the overall effectiveness of intervention measures.

These travellers underwent full baggage inspections. Travellers found to be carrying goods that did not meet import requirements at the point of exit from an airport were recorded as non-compliant travellers. This data was used to estimate the population of 'non-compliant travellers' at the point of exit out of the total traveller population.

During the year we transitioned from MAPS to TAMS. The data for biosecurity intervention and survey outcomes were recorded across both systems from October 2023 to June 2024 (noting a staggered national implementation). The data was extracted from both systems and analysed to produce the result. We undertook manual data quality assurance on TAMS data to identify and correct any data quality issues.

Caveats and disclosures

It is anticipated that some biosecurity risk material not meeting import conditions will cross the border when travellers fail to declare the items and present them for biosecurity inspection. Deliberate non-compliance requires additional controls and resources because increased levels of

intervention are required to detect and manage this type of non-compliance. Traveller behaviour impacts the effectiveness of the measure.

In 2023–24 we implemented TAMS to provide workflow and decision support to biosecurity officers, promote consistency, and enhance the quality of data to inform our intervention approach. This database is used to collect intervention data used in the calculations of this performance measure. It replaces the previous MAPS. Our biosecurity officers were trained and assessed prior to using TAMS in the live environment through a mix of eLearning, face-to-face training with technical trainers, and onsite support. We monitored data inputs following TAMS' implementation and created help cards for staff to address anomalies or inconsistencies in data usage.

Most international airports transitioned to TAMS in the first half of the 2023–24 financial year - Sydney and Melbourne transitioned in the fourth quarter. Limited auditing was undertaken of the data captured in MAPS during 2023–24 due to decommissioning of the Hyperion reporting capability and delays in the release of a Power BI replacement report. The reduction of MAPS verification data audits was also a result of limited resource capacity during the heightened FMD response at the border, which required biosecurity officers to manage additional biosecurity controls implemented to mitigate the FMD risk following a regional outbreak in 2022.

Variation from corporate plan
Tolerances were updated for greater clarity. For accuracy, we moved the measure to key activity 2.2.

Measure BI-02

BI-02	Biosecurity service standards are met.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Service standards are partially achieved.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24. Programs: 2.1.
Result	Partially achieved – 4 out of 11 service standards met, compared with 5 out of 12 in 2022–23.
Tolerances	Achieved: When 8 or more out of 11 service standards are met. Partially achieved: When 4 or more out of 11 service standards are met. Not achieved: When less than 4 out of 11 service standards are met.

Context
Our client service standards exist to provide guidance for industry on how quickly we intend to undertake our biosecurity operations functions at the border. Timeframes to complete a function can vary for many reasons, noting that the effective management of biosecurity risk is our first priority.

We measure our biosecurity operations performance against 11 service standards associated with delivery of our biosecurity and export regulatory responsibilities that are currently undertaken by biosecurity operations staff. These service standards are targets and they are not legislated. The targets vary because our standards measure different services.

This measure demonstrates the degree to which we minimise any unnecessary regulatory burden on industry, through efficiencies, while conducting our functions at the border.

Regulatory alignment

In delivering against this performance measure of efficiency, we build effectiveness through the 3 best practice principles of regulator performance as per the following examples:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we identify and minimise duplication and harmonise activities with other regulators to achieve better regulatory outcomes. For example, in 2023–24 we undertook a comprehensive post-implementation review of system enhancements, including AIMS and ICS updates, that were codesigned with other regulators. These enhancements, released in June 2023, further simplify the management of unaccompanied personal effect consignments and further enhance the digital information exchange from the ICS to our departmental systems. This provides our officers with additional information to make more informed decisions about appropriate onshore biosecurity risk mitigation activities.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we use intelligence and data to inform a risk-based approach to our biosecurity functions so we can direct our resources to higher risk activities. For example, in 2023–24 we expanded our Compliance Based Intervention Scheme (CBIS). This enables reduced intervention for compliant entities, resulting in expedited clearance of compliant goods and reduced regulatory costs. This impacts service standards by reducing the overall demand for the service, enabling more efficient use of available resources.

3) Collaboration and engagement – we engage regularly with stakeholders, including regulated entities, other regulators and the community. For example, we regularly engage with industry representatives through our Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Cargo Consultative Committee. In addition, we regularly publish import industry advice notices providing updates about operational changes and information to help industry understand their responsibilities.

Analysis

Of the 11 biosecurity service standards, we met or exceeded our target across 4 standards (2 in imports and 2 in exports). Table 16, Table 17 and Table 18 show the key service standard results for our client contact, imports, and exports work streams, respectively.

Table 16 Service standard results for client contact, 2023–24

Service standard	Service standard measure	Target (%)	2022–23 (%)	2023–24 (%)	Analysis
Calls to our national contact number	We will answer calls received through the national contact number 1800 900 090 within 5 minutes.	80	67	71	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to referral of enquiries to second level support for resolution, and reduced biosecurity officer numbers.
Online general enquiries form	For enquiries made through our online contact form, we will immediately confirm we have received your enquiry and respond to your request within 10 business days.	80	62	57	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to the impact of reduced biosecurity officer numbers.

Table 17 Service standard results for imports, 2023–24

Service standard	Service standard measure	Target (%)	2022–23 (%)	2023–24 (%)	Analysis
Goods inspection at an approved premises	We will provide this service within 3 business days of confirmation of your scheduled appointment.	95	78	86	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to reduced biosecurity officer numbers and industry preference for specific (morning or afternoon) inspection timeslots, rather than utilising the next available appointment. This has reduced our ability to fully utilise officer availability.
Non-commercial vessel inspection	If you are arriving at a port where we have a permanent staff presence, we will aim to provide an initial inspection within one business day from you advising us of your arrival.	95	97	97	The service standard target was met.
Treatments	We will provide you or your representative with treatment direction within 2 business days following an inspection.	95	88	74	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to reduced biosecurity officer numbers.
Import documents lodged via COLS	If we receive an urgent lodgement from you, we will process it within one business day.	80	79	97	Within this service standard there are 2 measures – urgent and non-urgent – which were measured and monitored separately. This service standard target was not met overall, however the measure for urgent import documents lodged via COLS was met.
	We will process non-urgent lodgements within 2 business days.	80	70	44	The service standard target was not met overall. We have attributed this to the high volumes of entry lodgements overall, and reduced biosecurity officer numbers, exceeding our capacity to meet the measure for non-urgent import documents lodged via COLS.
Import documents lodged by email	We will process your lodgement within 3 business days of receiving it.	80	98	98	The service standard target was met.

Table 18 Service standard results for exports, 2023–24

Service standard	Service standard measure	Target (%)	2022–23 (%)	2023–24 (%)	Analysis
Goods inspection at an export-registered establishment	An officer will inspect your goods within 3 business days of you requesting an appointment.	95	95	95	The service standard target was met.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

54

Service standard	Service standard measure	Target (%)	2022–23 (%)	2023–24 (%)	Analysis
Goods inspection for airfreight exports	We will inspect your goods within 24 hours of you requesting an appointment.	95	79	81	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to reduced department authorised officer numbers.
Goods inspection for sea freight exports	We will inspect your goods within 3 business days of you requesting an appointment.	95	95	94	The service standard target was not met. We have attributed this to reduced department authorised officer numbers.
Bulk vessels for export inspection	We will inspect your vessel within 3 business days of a confirmed appointment.	95	96	100	The service standard target was met. We conducted one inspection for the full year. Industry performs a majority of these inspections.

The nationally competitive labour market continued to limit our ability to attract suitable applicants for our biosecurity officer roles. Within the Cargo Operations Pathway, recruitment activities to overcome the 2022–23 budgetary recruitment restrictions resulted in 161 staff commencements nationally, however the net FTE figure decreased by 12. This has significantly impacted our capacity to meet service standards, noting the efforts required to train new staff, and the minimum investment of 3 to 6 months before new officers are fully competent to undertake operational roles.

Our ability to meet service standard timeframes is further inhibited by our systems which require significant manual labour. Investment into our systems to improve efficiency is a current priority.

During 2023–24 we invested in expanding the scope of Automatic Entry Processing (AEP) to provide more opportunities to accredited persons under Approved Arrangement classes 19.1 and 19.2. This included viewing government-to-government electronic certificates; directing containers requiring a rural tailgate inspection to particular locations for inspection; and using AEP for additional tariff groups and BICON pathways.

AEP offers us an opportunity to reduce the volume of document assessments being performed by biosecurity officers, so we can better utilise staff to strategically target higher-risk imported goods, and better manage biosecurity operations.

Throughout the financial year, we continued to encourage increased uptake of AEP and other approved arrangements by biosecurity industry participants. Unfortunately, rural tailgate inspections performed by biosecurity industry participants under class 14.4 has seen low uptake, reducing our ability to redeploy existing biosecurity officers to higher risk activities.

As we introduce changes to our operational processes and data capture, we will consider appropriate changes to our service standards to ensure they reflect current operating models.

Methodology and data sources
We extracted data from multiple departmental information systems:

- Agriculture Import Management System (AIMS)

- Biosecurity Import Conditions (BICON) system

- Cargo Online Lodgement System (COLS)

- Cargo Workflow Management System (CWMS)

- Client Contact Management System (CCMS)

- Maritime and Aircraft Reporting System (MARS)

- Scheduling and Workforce Management System (SWMS)

- Unified Client Centre Express (UCCX).

Our reports prepared were peer reviewed.

Caveats and disclosures

The calls to our national contact number service standard measures the response time frame for answering calls to the 1800 number.

When online general enquiry forms were referred to second-level support for resolution, the original query was treated as not meeting the 10-business day service level target.

Entries with multiple inspection or treatment directions were deemed out-of-scope due to data and source system limitations. Entries where a treatment direction was applied within 5 minutes of the inspection direction were deemed out-of-scope, as they are applied at the time of document assessment, rather than as a result of an inspection outcome.

We use a service charter clock to monitor our processing times for import documents lodged via COLS. The clock is paused when assessments await client feedback before finalisation.

The methodology and business process to calculate the Import documents lodged by email service standard was changed from November 2023. The first 4 months of the financial year relied on a summary per business day. The new process measures each individual lodgement which can be more easily audited and verified. Monthly results were averaged to reach the reported result.

The service level for non-commercial vessel inspection only applies to first point of entry locations where we have a permanent staff presence. Service standard calculations commence at the beginning of the business day following the vessel's arrival.

The wording of service standards will need to be updated over time to ensure that they reflect current operations. Not all services offered are captured by the service standards, for example bulk bookings.

Variation from corporate plan

For accuracy we moved the measure to key activity 2.2.

In the *Corporate Plan 2023–24* we had 12 service standards related to biosecurity. These were:

1) calls to our national contact number

2) online general enquiries form

3) goods inspection at an approved premises

4) non-commercial vessel inspection

5) treatments

6) import documents lodged via Cargo Online Lodgement System (COLS), urgent and non-urgent

7) import documents lodged by email

8) import permits

9) goods inspection at an export-registered establishment

10) goods inspection for airfreight exports

11) goods inspection for sea freight exports

12) bulk vessels for export inspection.

We extracted the import permits (service standard 8) from BI-02 in the *Corporate Plan 2023–24*, reducing the number of service standards reported on from 12 to 11. Performance measure BI-10, added to the 2023–24 annual performance statements, provides the result for this service standard.

Our tolerances were updated to reflect performance across the 11 service standards. A 'partially achieved' result now requires 4 or more service standards to be met.

Measure BI-07

BI-07	Reduction in risk of African swine fever (ASF) because of biosecurity measures implemented by the department.
Measure type	Effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Mail: 50% or greater improvement in detection of non-letter class containing pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. Traveller: 50% or greater improvement in detection of travellers with pork products compared with pre-ASF measures.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.* *Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24.* Programs: 2.2.
Result	Mail pathway: Achieved – 220% improvement in interception rate has been achieved when compared to pre-ASF measures. Traveller pathway: Achieved – 73% improvement in interception rate has been achieved when compared to pre-ASF measures.
Tolerances	Achieved: • Mail: 50% or greater improvement in detection of non-letter class containing pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. • Traveller: 50% or greater improvement in detection of travellers with pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. Partially achieved: • Mail: 1% to 49% improvement in detection of non-letter class containing pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. • Traveller: 1% to 49% improvement in detection of travellers with pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. Not achieved: • Mail: No improvement in detection of non-letter class containing pork products compared with pre-ASF measures. • Traveller: No improvement in detection of travellers with pork products compared with pre-ASF measures.

Context

We safeguard Australia's animal health status to achieve, maintain and expand access to overseas markets while also protecting Australian agriculture, the economy and our environment.

We work with state and territory governments, Animal Health Australia and industry to deliver optimal animal biosecurity outcomes for Australia. We govern conditions on animals and animal-based products that enter the country via the cargo pathway (for commercial imports) or via the mail and traveller pathways.

In November 2018 we commenced implementing increased risk mitigation activities for the international traveller and mail pathways. Our activities – increased number of frontline biosecurity officers including detector dogs, 3D X-ray machines, and sustainment of traveller and mail modernisation program – have improved interception of illegally imported pork and pork products that may carry diseases such as African swine fever (ASF). Learn more about measures to keep ASF out of Australia.

The risk mitigation measures we have at the border to detect ASF are also designed and deployed to target and manage the risk of several other diseases entering Australia via mail and traveller pathways, such as FMD, one of the most serious livestock diseases affecting all cloven-hoofed animals. The measure is therefore a good indicator of the department's success in biosecurity risk reduction activities more generally.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1)   Continuous improvement and building trust – we proactively engage in improving our data collection, management and analysis to gain insight into the effectiveness of the biosecurity controls keeping ASF out of Australia. For example, in 2023–24 we implemented TAMS to improve our ability to identify and target high-risk travellers for biosecurity screening.

2)   Risk-based and data-driven – we direct risk mitigation measures to manage the risk of diseases entering Australia. We monitor our measures to ensure risk remains at a level consistent with Australia's legislated appropriate level of protection. Our commodity-specific import conditions ensure that exotic diseases of concern are appropriately managed. For example, the 2022 FMD outbreak in Indonesia resulted our department reviewing import permits for animal products from Indonesia that may carry FMD and suspended those of concern. Additional mitigation measures included advising livestock industries to be alert, raising awareness at the border, particularly in northern Australia including the addition of foot mats for travellers, providing advice to state and territory governments, and liaising with Indonesian counterparts.

3)   Collaboration and engagement – we conduct extensive public awareness and education campaigns on the value of maintaining Australia's freedom from ASF. We promote biosecurity awareness to international travellers and recipients of international mail by engaging with them through our website, signage at international ports, leaflets and brochures, social media campaigns, and ministerial and departmental media releases.

Analysis

The ASF measures we implemented post-November 2018 continued to reduce the likelihood of this disease entering Australia via international traveller and mail pathways. The measures included

increasing the number of front-line biosecurity officers, including detector dogs and specialist handlers; 3D X-ray capability at international airports and undertaking the Traveller and Mail Modernisation Program. Table 19 shows that our actions had a positive effect on the:

- interception of non-letter class mail containing pork products, which improved by 220% (from 0.005% to 0.016%)

- interception rate of travellers carrying pork products, which improved by 73% (from 1.190% to 2.056%).

We continued to monitor these measures to ensure the risk of ASF entering Australia remains at a level consistent with Australia's appropriate level of protection.

Table 19 Effectiveness of pre-ASF measures (2015–16 to 2017–18) and post-ASF measures (2021–22 to 2023–24) by pathway

Pathway	Category	Unit	Pre-ASF measures average (2015–16 to 2017–2018)	Post-ASF measures average (2021–22 to 2023–24)[a]
Non-letter-class mail articles	Screened mail articles containing pork products	%	0.005	0.016
	Pork items seized	no.	4,110	3140
	Weight of pork items seized	tonnes	4.8	3.8
Incoming travellers	Screened travellers detected with pork products	%	1.190	2.056
	Pork items seized	no.	34,599	33,684
	Weight of pork items seized	tonnes	28.9	28.2

a 2023–24 mail data excludes the months of May and June 2024.

Methodology and data sources

Our airport and mail biosecurity officers entered data into MAPS or TAMS. We then compared our data to that obtained before the implementation of ASF measures (5 November 2018).

Data analysis determined the results and these reports were peer reviewed. Where the result varied from expected findings, we reviewed the reporting methodology for reliability and investigated variations for additional insight.

Caveats and disclosures

TAMS was developed to replace MAPS and will be fully implemented by late-2024. During the transition both systems were used for reporting. The exception to this was mail data entered into TAMS. The transition from MAPS to TAMS in the mail pathway resulted in the inability to extract or quality assure May and June 2024 mail data. As a result, May and June 2024 mail data is excluded from the calculation. This is unlikely to have a significant effect on the results for the mail pathway as we reported on 3-year averages and percentages (34 of the 36 months data was reported). Manual assurance checks were undertaken on TAMS traveller data during and following TAMS implementation.

Most international airports transitioned to TAMS in the first half of the 2023–24 financial year - Sydney and Melbourne transitioned in the fourth quarter. Limited auditing was undertaken of the data captured in MAPS during 2023–24 due to decommissioning of the Hyperion reporting capability

and delays in the release of a Power BI replacement report. The reduction of MAPS verification data audits was also a result of limited resource capacity during the heightened FMD response at the border, which required biosecurity officers to manage additional biosecurity controls implemented to mitigate the FMD risk following a regional outbreak in 2022.

The percentage calculations used for non-letter-class mail articles includes the use of screened and unscreened non-letter mail articles as the denominator.

Variation from corporate plan
The target was updated for greater clarity. *The Corporate Plan 2023–24* indicated alignment with regulator best practice principles 2 and 3. We have since further demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Key activity 2.3
Respond to and minimise the impact of biosecurity incursions through appropriate post-border measures.

Measure BI-08

BI-08	Undertake compliance and enforcement actions.
Measure type	Output and regulatory.
Target	Baseline in 2023–24.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Achieved:
	Actioned 47 incidents of high-risk non-compliance referrals.
	Response outcomes undertaken by Investigations Branch were:
	• commenced formal investigation (17)
	• enforceable undertaking (7)
	• letter of warning (8)
	• infringement notice (3)
	• letter of advice (3)
	• civil penalty (1)
	• verbal education (1)
	Additional response outcomes by Compliance and Enforcement Division to high-risk non compliance were:
	• intelligence assessment (5)
	• revocation of approved Arrangement (1)
	• further monitoring (1).

Context
We undertake enforcement actions against high-risk non-compliance referrals identified against relevant portfolio legislation, including the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. These actions strengthen our national biosecurity system, serve as a deterrence and enhance our reputation as a regulator.

By subjecting all non-compliance referrals to a risk assessment process, we can action non-compliance that poses the highest risk to the Australian community, as well as guarding Australia's reputation as an exporter of premium produce.

Enforcement actions are appropriately identified and actioned through established processes. These can result in a variety of outcomes – for example, civil sanctions (infringements, enforceable undertakings or civil litigation) and criminal prosecutions.

We consider a range of factors when making an assessment for high-risk non-compliance, including the actual risk, the seriousness of the contravention, the intent and the frequency with which the non-compliance has been occurring. Some matters do not progress to assessment due to valid reasons – for example, lack of sufficient evidence. Similarly, a reported incident of non–compliance may not necessarily constitute a breach of legislation and may be used for intelligence purposes only.

Regulatory alignment

This measure aligned with the 3 regulator best practice principles:

1) Continuous improvement and building trust – we comply with regular internal and external reviews to verify our compliance with our regulatory requirements. We comply with the standards outlined under the Australian Government Investigative Standards.

2) Risk-based and data-driven – we focus on the management of compliance and undertake enforcement activities where risks and impact of harm are potentially higher. We apply appropriate actions based on the potential risk resulting from the non-compliance by reviewing all available evidence and data.

3) Collaboration and engagement – our collaboration and engagement are centred around the processes and procedures of our Operational Coordination Committee (OCC). The OCC is operated out of our department's Operational Intelligence and Coordination Branch and works collaboratively with over 25 senior stakeholders from across the department, who refer the high-risk non-compliance matters to the OCC. We partner with other Australian Government agencies to achieve regulatory outcomes. Where non-compliance is detected and it is relevant to do so, we share information and conduct joint investigations with other law enforcement agencies and regulators.

Analysis

During 2023–24 we actioned 100% (47 incidents) of high-risk non-compliance.

Methodology and data sources

We used our Compliance Case Management System (CCMS) to assess all non-compliance matters referred to the Compliance and Enforcement Division and to capture the workflow for subsequent referrals for action. CCMS was used to escalate high-risk non-compliance matters to the OCC and capture the workflow for matters endorsed for the allocation of Compliance and Enforcement Division resources. Outcomes from the OCC were recorded and tracked via an Excel sheet (OCC outcome tracker) maintained by the Operations Coordination Team (OCT). The progress of investigations of high-risk non-compliance referred to the Investigations Branch was tracked through our investigation case management system (Jade).

To determine the subsequent response, we extracted information relevant to the referral status from the OCT OCC outcome tracker, CCMS and Jade.

Caveats and disclosures

The result did not consider non-compliance that was not referred to the Compliance and Enforcement Division. Such matters relate to managed non-compliant behaviour subject to alternative risk mitigation options within program activities which do not require sanction action.

As investigations can span multiple years, the closed investigations included matters received prior to but resolved during the reporting period. The period taken from commencement to closure of an investigation will depend on the nature of the issues under investigation.

By recording and baselining data points over time we can identify changes in referral activity and position our workforce in a more targeted manner for future reporting.

Variation from corporate plan

The *Corporate Plan 2023–24* referenced alignment with regulator best practice principle 2. We have since demonstrated alignment with all 3 regulator best practice principles.

Objective 3 Resilience and sustainability

Increase the contribution agriculture, fisheries and forestry make to a healthy, sustainable and low-emissions environment.

Key activity 3.1

Increase opportunities for industry to reduce emissions and contribute to Australia's net-zero goals.

Measure RS-01

RS-01	Delivery of projects, programs and activities that help the agricultural industry transition to a net-zero economy.
Measure type	Output.
Target	• Consult stakeholders to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan. • Secure funding to support the sector to reduce emissions. • National Heritage Trust (NHT) grant rounds opened. • One engagement activity planned with another country.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Achieved – public consultations were held to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan with funding announced for relevant measures in the 2024–25 Federal Budget, and Climate-Smart Agriculture Program round one grants opened. We held a technical research workshop with our New Zealand counterparts.
Tolerances	Achieved: • Stakeholders consulted to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan. • Funding secured to support the sector to reduce emissions. • NHT grant funding rounds opened. • Planned engagement with another country is delivered. Partially achieved: • Stakeholder consultation to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan planned but not delivered. • Funding sought but not secured to support the sector to reduce emissions. • NHT grant rounds planned but not opened. • Engagement with another country is planned but not delivered. Not achieved: • Stakeholders not consulted to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan. • Funding not sought to support the sector to reduce emissions. • NHT grant rounds not opened. • No engagement with another country is planned or delivered.

Context

This performance measure demonstrates our contribution to help the agricultural sector build an understanding of emissions reduction opportunities and adopt technologies and practices over time. The analysis section outlines the activities undertaken in 2023–24 to demonstrate how we are providing pathways that support the sector to transition to a low emissions future. This includes leading the ongoing development of the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan and opening the grant-based program investment streams under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is the lead agency on the government's climate policies. We are responsible for delivering projects, programs and activities that support agriculture's contribution to the government's net-zero targets.

Analysis

In 2023–24 we opened round one of the grant-based program investment streams for the $302.1 million Climate-Smart Agriculture Program through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). Note that this program is also covered by performance measure RS-02 because it aims to address multiple sustainability outcomes, including for the agricultural sector to adopt practices to reduce emissions and build resilience to climate change. Successful round one grants from this program, for projects

that will contribute to helping farmers and land managers to reduce their emissions and contribute to a net zero economy, will be announced in the second half of 2024.

We conducted a public consultation process from 7 November 2023 to 5 January 2024 to inform our development of the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan – one of 6 sectoral plans that will support the government's net zero goals. While development of the plan is ongoing, the consultation is helping us identify opportunities under the plan for farmers and land managers to contribute to Australia's net zero goal; providing the certainty needed to underpin investments in Australia's low-emissions future. We held 14 workshops and meetings with stakeholders during the consultation period. We received over 230 written submissions. In May 2024, we also held the Sustainable Agriculture Summit with over 100 stakeholders to build a shared understanding of industry's role in Australia's net zero economy. Key issues raised included the incomplete inventory data on agricultural emissions, lack of alignment across the various emissions calculators, the need for government to set standards for calculators, building the capacity of the sector to respond to market signals and greater leadership, coordination and investment in research, development and innovation. In response, the government committed $63.8 million over 10 years to support initial emissions reduction efforts in the agriculture and land sector. We will deliver joint initiatives with DCCEEW from 2024–25 onwards.

In 2023–24 we delivered engagement activities with New Zealand to develop a deeper partnership on emissions reduction in agriculture. In November 2023 we hosted a technical research workshop with New Zealand and Australian experts to build shared understanding on the current state of science and agree on critical, common research gaps. This was followed by a climate policy exchange with our New Zealand counterparts in June 2024 where there was officer level agreement to continue collaboration.

Methodology and data sources
Our website outlines our stakeholder consultation to inform the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan, the funding announced to support industry to reduce emissions, and the grant opportunities opened through the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

We conducted grant management processes consistent with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines.

Caveats and disclosures
Activities associated with the agricultural sector make up a significant part of Australia's – and the world's – greenhouse gas emissions. While the Australian Government does not directly regulate or have responsibility for on-farm practices, it is committed to supporting the agricultural sector to sustainably reduce emissions and manage the impacts of climate change. Many of the initiatives being delivered by our department that will support the sector to reduce its emissions will commence from 2024–25. There will be other variables that impact the pace and extent to which industry will adopt emissions reduction tools and techniques, and the consequential reduction in emissions achieved. This includes other government programs that directly or indirectly support upskilling of the agriculture industry and emissions reduction activities.

Variation from Corporate plan
We revised the performance measure and updated the methodology and data sources. We introduced targets and tolerances to more appropriately reflect our efforts to increase opportunities

for industry to reduce emissions and contribute to Australia's net-zero goals, following announcements to develop the Agriculture and Land Sectoral Plan.

Key activity 3.2

Support the increased adoption of sustainable management practices through funding partnerships and engagement activities.

Measure RS-02

RS-02	Sustainable farming practices are funded through the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program
Measure type	Output
Target	Deliver 100% of 2023–24 funding profile according to agreed milestones for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.
Source	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
Result	Partially achieved – 80.7% of 2023–24 funds for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program delivered.
Tolerances	Achieved: 100% of relevant financial year funding profile for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program delivered. Partially achieved: 80% to 99% of relevant financial year funding profile for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program delivered. Not achieved: 0% to 79% of relevant financial year funding profile for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program delivered.

Context

We support the agricultural sector in adopting sustainable agriculture practices and building resilience to climate-change through the NHT's $302.1 million Climate-Smart Agriculture Program. The program commenced in the 2023–24 financial year and established 9 integrated investment streams over 5 years until 2027–28.

Projects and activities funded under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program align with the government's objective to drive agricultural sustainability, productivity, and competitiveness. Learn more about the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program investment streams.

Analysis

The National Heritage Trust of Australia account is a special account established by the Financial Management Legislation Amendment Act 1999. As at 30 June 2024, 80.7% of the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program annual profile has been delivered, as shown in Table 20. Expenditure focussed on funding climate-smart, sustainable agriculture activities across Australia, along with critical program design and delivery start-up activities.

In 2023–24 all grant-based program investment streams were opened for applications, with funding delivered under the Regional Soil Coordinators and Soil Community of Practice grants as well as the Supporting National Landcare Organisations grants. In addition, a number of key sustainable agriculture services were negotiated and procured with delivery partners across Australia, these being the Australian National Soil Information System and the National Soil Monitoring Program, a national network of Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators, Regional Landscape Priority Projects, Emergency Preparedness projects and Regional Capacity Services for our Panel of Regional Delivery Partners.

We worked with DCCEW to establish a whole-of-government panel of [Regional Delivery Partners](#) in 52 management units across Australia for the provision of sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and environmental protection services. It is the first time a panel of this nature has been established by the Australian Government. The panel took time to establish, which impacted the delivery of funding for the Regional Landscape Priority Projects and the establishment of the Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator network during the first year of the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program. The panel is now providing the option for any government agency to access the panel for services relating to environment protection, sustainable agriculture, or natural resource management.

Table 20 Climate-Smart Agriculture Program funding delivered, 2023–24

2023–24 Climate-Smart Agriculture Program funding	Profile ($)	Delivered ($)
Partnerships and Innovation	0	0
Capacity Building	0	0
Regional Soil Coordinators and Soil Community of Practice	386,078	386,078
Small Grants	0	0
Supporting National Landcare Organisations	1,717,000	1,717,000
Australian National Soil Information System and National Soil Monitoring Program	3,067,000	3,067,000
Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators	5,355,000	4,199,889
Regional Capacity Services	5,310,840	5,310,840
Regional Landscape Priority Projects and Emergency Preparedness	9,570,000	5,200,000
Program Delivery [a]	4,460,000	4,214,580
Total	**29,865,918**	**24,095,387**

a Program delivery aligns to the performance measure related key activity 3.2, funding the implementation of programs that support the agricultural sector to adopt sustainable agriculture practices.

Methodology and data sources

We tracked and verified expenditure through invoices, contractual arrangements and data held in our financial management information system, as well as DCCEEW's financial management system and financial reports provided from the NHT Special Account.

Variation from Corporate plan

We revised the performance measure and updated the measure type, target, tolerances, methodology and data sources to better reflect the outcomes of the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program as the sole program contributing to this performance measure, and to better reflect our department's efforts in delivering the program. Additionally, the performance measure from 2022– 23 utilised ABARES survey results as a data source and indicator of success. This has been removed for the revised performance measure.

Measure RS-04

RS-04	The proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks that are sustainably managed.
Measure type	Effectiveness.
Target	The proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels is maintained or increases year-on-year.
Source	New measure for 2023–24.
Result	Not achieved – The proportion of fish stocks assessed as 'not subject to overfishing' decreased from 80% in the previous year to 73% in 2022. This is a total of 75 out of 102 stocks not subject to overfishing, compared with 81 out of 101 in the previous year.
Tolerances	Achieved: If the proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks assessed as 'not subject to overfishing' is maintained or increases compared with the previous year. Partially achieved: Not applicable. Not achieved: If the proportion of Australian Government managed fish stocks assessed as 'not subject to overfishing' decreases compared with the previous year.

Context

We play an important policy role in promoting the biological, economic and social sustainability of Australian fisheries, particularly those managed by the Australian Government (Commonwealth fisheries). We have responsibility for ensuring Commonwealth fisheries are sustainably managed. This is achieved through the development and review of legislative and policy settings designed to maximise the benefits to the Australian community.

In 2023–24 we finalised a structural adjustment process to reduce the number of licences and take pressure off stocks in the Commonwealth Trawl Sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery. Structural adjustment refers to a process of change in resource allocations (allocations of land, labour and capital) among economic entities (sectors, firms and individuals) to achieve improvements in economic efficiency and net economic returns (Productivity Commission 1999). The Commonwealth Trawl Sector structural adjustment package provided $20 million for the buyback of statutory fishing rights to allow fishing businesses to voluntarily exit the industry. We also worked directly within relevant regional fisheries management organisations to set management measures, monitor compliance and work to ensure the sustainability of internationally shared fish stocks of importance to Australia.

Analysis

A total of 75 out of 102 stocks were not subject to overfishing according to the fishing mortality metric in the ABARES Fishery status reports 2023 compared with 81 out of 101 in the previous year. Of these, 6 were subject to overfishing in 2022 compared with 5 in the previous year, the remainder moved to the uncertain category.

We monitor appropriateness of fisheries policy and programs, and work with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on implementation of these policies and programs. During the year we began reviews of 2 key policies in the Commonwealth fisheries management framework - the *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy* and the *Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy*.

Methodology and data sources

To establish the result, we divided the number of fish stocks assessed as 'not subject to overfishing' in the ABARES Fishery status reports 2023 by the total number of fish stocks assessed. The report assesses biological status for 2022.

The focus on 'overfishing' coming from fishing mortality is based on the policy and legislative settings that are within our sphere of influence. Biomass may be impacted by historical overfishing, environmental factors, other industry or state and territory decisions but fishing mortality is directly impacted by our policies including the Harvest Strategy Policy.

Caveats and disclosures

The most recent information available is the 2023 Fisheries Status Report. This found more stocks being assessed as uncertain. Some of the key challenges identified include loss of data due to reliance on fishery-dependent data, declining quality of total mortality data, ageing stock assessments and increasing uncertainty in stock assessment outputs and climate change.

There were 102 stocks in the 2023 report compared with 101 stocks in the previous year. The additional stock is the result of the splitting of blue warehou (*Seriolella brama*) into 2 separate reporting units. In previous years ABARES reported on a single 'management unit' stock comprising 2 biological stocks (eastern and western); but because these stocks were found to have different statuses in 2022, it was no longer possible to leave them combined as a single reporting unit.

The AFMA undertakes the day-to-day management of Commonwealth fisheries, including implementation of licensing arrangements and harvest control measures. This must occur in accordance with the policy and regulatory settings established by our department.

Variation from corporate plan

This measure was introduced in the 2023–24 annual performance statements to refer to the proportion of fish stocks that are sustainable. This can be accurately compared to previous years, provides an accurate indication of change and is closely aligned to the policy framework managed by our department that sets the parameters for the AFMA to undertake its operations as the regulator.

Key activity 3.3

Strengthen the resilience of industry and its ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Measure RS-03

RS-03	Administer annual funding from the Future Drought Fund to build drought resilience in Australia's agricultural industry in accordance with the *Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020–2024) Determination 2020.*
Measure type	Output.
Target	Deliver $100 m in funding in 2023–24.
Sources	*Corporate Plan 2023–24.*
	Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24 Program: 1.11
Result	Achieved – $110.38 m was expended under the Future Drought Fund in 2023–24.
Tolerances	Achieved: 70% to 100%. Partially achieved: 50% to 69%. Not achieved: 0% to 49%.

Context

Drought is an enduring feature of the Australian landscape that has significant economic, social, and environmental impacts. Australia's changing climate is likely to mean more frequent, longer lasting, and intense droughts in many regions.

We provide whole-of-government coordination and advice on drought policy and promote preparedness for the significant impacts of Australia's changing climate. This is conducted through programs to build long-term resilience for farmers and communities, including through the Future Drought Fund (FDF).

The FDF is a $5 billion initiative, established in 2019, to help Australian farmers and communities prepare for the impacts of drought, and meet the agreed role of the Commonwealth under the National Drought Agreement. The FDF makes available $100 million each year for drought resilience initiatives.

Investments are governed by the Future Drought Fund Act 2019, and a drought resilience funding plan which is renewed every 4 years. The first *Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020–2024) Determination 2020* (Funding Plan 2020–2024) came into effect in 2020 to guide the first 4 years of FDF investment.

In 2023 the Productivity Commission (PC) undertook a review of the effectiveness of the FDF in its first 4 years of operation. Overall, the PC's review acknowledged the solid foundation established to support farmers and their communities prepare for drought. The PC's review outlined 14 recommendations to improve the FDF, including both fund-wide and program specific recommendations.

Our department and the Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee conducted a national consultation to inform the development of the second funding plan for the period 2024–2028. Over 302 stakeholders attended one or more of the 20 face-to-face meetings held across 16 locations around Australia.

The PC's review and feedback from the national consultation informed the development of the Future Drought Fund (Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2024–2028) Determination 2024 (Funding Plan 2024–2028), which commenced on 9 February 2024.

For the period 2023–24, the relevant funding plan was the Funding Plan 2020–2024. The strategic objectives of the plan were to build economic, environmental and social resilience to drought.

On 7 May 2024 the Prime Minister committed $519.1 million over 8 years for FDF programs in accordance with this legislative instrument.

Analysis

$110.38 million was expended under the FDF in 2023–24. This exceeded the target due to an underspend in prior years. Reasons for the underspend vary, but generally relate to initial delays establishing the foundational programs including protracted contract negotiations and the consequential delay in planned activity and payment milestones into future financial years. Any unspent funds are returned to or retained in the FDF. This is a requirement of the *Future Drought Fund Act 2019*.

In 2023–24 the FDF invested in 16 programs to build drought resilience under 4 key themes:

- better climate information – enabling farmers, businesses and communities to better understand the climate risks they face and their resilience to those risks

- better planning – helping farmers and regions to proactively plan for drought

- better practices – developing and adopting farming and land management practices and technologies that improve resilience to droughts

- better prepared communities – building and supporting the community leaders, networks and organisations that underpin community resilience.

Two new programs commenced under the FDF in 2023–24:

- Drought Resilience Commercialisation Initiative.

- Long Term Trial of Drought Resilient Farming Practices Grants program.

In addition, foundational FDF programs continued to be delivered in 2023–24, including:

- Drought Resilience Innovation and Adoption Hubs

- Farm Business Resilience program

- Regional Drought Resilience Planning program

- Climate Service for Agriculture program.

We delivered investments in partnership with third parties – including industry, universities and non-governmental organisations – and state and territory governments through a variety of arrangements, including grants, procurement and Federation Funding Agreements.

Methodology and data sources

We assessed each program, individual grant or arrangement for consistency with the Funding Plan 2020–2024, prior to approval. Financial management data was sourced from our financial management system (TechnologyOne) and the Community Grants Hub for each grant or arrangement. We published payment information for each program on our website as required under section 27A of the *Future Drought Fund Act 2019*.

Variation from corporate plan

Updates were made to the measure wording to reflect the work undertaken by our department more accurately, and the significance of drought as a government priority. The updated measure specifically refers to the governing legislative instrument – the Funding Plan 2020–2024.