IMPORTS AND EXPORT PROCEDURES: THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

ROSALIE J. HECKLER

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Batchelar Agriculture Centre
Palmerston North

Most crop pests, diseases, and weeds established in New Zealand have originated overseas. Many more could still be introduced on imported plants and plant products. New Zealand has the advantage of excellent geographical isolation which acts as a natural barrier to the spread of parasites.

Most diseases and many pests have been carried here by man. Some exceptions are rust diseases and insects which have blown across the Tasman Sea from Australia.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) quarantine role is to prevent the entry into New Zealand of unwanted parasites not already established here. This cannot be done alone so cooperation is required from the industry and the travelling public.

Legislation under which MAF controls plant imports and quarantine include: The Plants Act 1970, Introduction and Quarantine of Plant Regulations 1973, and The Noxious Plants Act 1978.

IMPORTING

Anyone may import nursery stock, bulbs, corms, etc of ornamental plants, as well as most seeds and cutflowers, subject to the conditions in the regulations.

Nursery stock (whole plants, cuttings, budwood) is divided into two main categories: *Closed Quarantine,* and *Open Quarantine.*

Closed Quarantine. This is for plants of great economic importance and those which are on the prohibited list. Crops included in this system are berryfruit, citrus, many conifers, grapes, potatoes, pip and stonefruit. Very small quantities of new cultivars of this type of nursery stock are imported and usually quarantined in Auckland. Parts of the original plants, if clean, are later released to the industry. The conditions and time intervals for closed quarantine are many and varied.

Open Quarantine. This system is for most other classes of nursery stock which include several thousand species of plant. These plants present less of an economic risk and their importation is subject to a less intensive quarantine procedure.

Nursery stock allowed entry into New Zealand through open quarantine may be imported provided several conditions are met:

- A prior permit to import is obtained from MAF, New Zealand, and is with the plant on arrival at the point of entry.

- The consignment is accompanied by an International Plant Health Certificate, with the necessary endorsements. This is to be issued in the country of origin of the plants.
- The nursery stock on arrival is to be free from pests and diseases.
- The plants are to be grown for a period in quarantine after arrival in New Zealand.

General Nursery Stock. Nursery stock for growing has a potential quarantine risk as the parasites are already in contact with their hosts. These can easily become established when the host is moved to another area. For this reason, the plant material is detained in post-entry quarantine on arrival and checked for any latent infection or infestation. Under the open quarantine system the minimum quarantine period ranges from three months for orchids to two growing seasons for roses.

Bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes of ornamental plants may be imported provided they are dormant, free of soil, pest and disease, and are accompanied by a health certificate. Generally, no prior permit or detention in post-entry quarantine is necessary.

Exceptions are:

- Begonias, paeonies, and orchids. They are classed as general nursery stock and subject to quarantine.
- Gladioli, rhizomatous irises, lilium spp. and tulips. For these, the accompanying health certificate must contain an endorsement: "That the bulbs, corms, tubers were obtained from plants inspected during the previous growing season by the appropriate government organisation and found to be free from pests and diseases, including virus diseases".

Some nursery stock does not require an import permit or any detention in quarantine. These include:

- Orchids and some other ornamentals growing in flasks under sterile conditions. They should be accompanied by a health certificate.
- Alocasias and colocasias.
- Coconuts.

Importer's Role. It is up to the importer to provide the suitable post-entry quarantine site. An import permit will not be issued until this requirement is met.

While in quarantine, the plants must be given optimum growing conditions and may not be moved or propagated without prior permission of MAF. Importers are restricted to the number of plant units that they may import at any one time or in one year.

- Plants arriving without an import permit will be either destroyed or reshipped at the importer's expense.

MAF's Role, Now that I have given you a broad overview of the quarantine system in New Zealand, I will outline where MAF fits in. MAF has a major role in the

importation of plants which is to:

- Receive the import application;
- Check the quarantine site and authorise the application;
- Issue the import permit;
- Inspect the plants regularly while in post-entry quarantine;
- Release the plants when the quarantine period has been observed.

In summary, MAF's role is to help prevent and intercept any new pest or disease that may enter New Zealand on plant material.

EXPORTING

MAF's role in the export of plants and plant products is to:

- Interpret the importing country's plant health requirements.
- Ensure that these requirements are met.
- Provide certification to MAF's counterparts overseas.

This involves:

- Establishing acceptable quarantine levels and informing the industry.
- Advising exporters of any changes in the quarantine requirements of respective countries.
- Preparation of export spray programmes.
- In conjunction with the industry the setting up of acceptable quality levels.

Quality Assurance. Perhaps the most important MAF role relates to quality assurance of export products. This involves ensuring that the quality of the product is monitored throughout all stages of the production chain, from the grower through to the exporter and the overseas market. Early detection and accurate identification of problems in the production chain saves time and money, and is important in guaranteeing a quality product. Quality assurance is market led rather than production driven. It is the suitability of a product for a purpose. Horticultural products should be tailored to what the market wants rather than what we want to produce or have already produced.

Export Certification. Once MAF is confident that the plants or plant products to be exported have reached the required standard, an International Plant Health Certificate will be issued to the exporter. This is a government-to-government document issued under the International Plant Protection Convention. This certificate states that the produce at the time of inspection met the requirements of the importing country. It is valid for only fourteen days.

General Information. People considering export should check with MAF as soon as they receive an initial enquiry. This is particularly important with nursery stock as additional requirements may need to be carried out by MAF.

This may include one or all of the following:

- Inspection during the previous growing season.
- Plants may be required to grow in sterile media for a specified time prior to export.
- Soil analysis for soil borne pests and diseases. For example: Potato Cyst Nematode.
- An export spray programme may need to be followed.

In conclusion, I would like to say that New Zealand's ability to develop and maintain overseas markets depends on its continued reputation of exporting quality plants and plant products, free from pests and diseases. The whole industry is responsible for maintaining this reputation. As I have only been able to cover both import and export in general principles, I suggest that if you have any further queries that you contact your nearest MAF office.

PRODUCTION OF *WASABIA JAPONICA* IN JAPAN

JOHN M. FOLLETT

Ruakura Soil and Plant Research Station
Private Bag
Hamilton

Wasabi (*Wasabia japonica* [syn. *Eutrema japonica; E. wasabi*] is a member of the Cruciferae family, a semi-aquatic native to the montane forest areas of Japan. Wasabi produces a stem, often referred to as a rhizome, in a similar fashion to a small brussel sprout. As the stem grows the lower leaf petioles fall off, and when the stem is about 15 cm long it is harvested.Traditionally, the stem is ground up into paste and used as a condiment with Sashimi (raw fish), Sushi (fish and rice) and Soba (buckwheat noodles). The best quality stems are sold fresh through the wholesale markets. In recent years wasabi has become more popular resulting in both the lower grade stems and leaf petioles being used for processing. At the Tokyo Central Wholesale Market processing wasabi sells for low prices and price premiums can only be obtained for high quality produce.

Wasabi is grown on all major islands of Japan except Hokkaido, and is also grown in Taiwan and North Korea.

In Japan the area planted in wasabi has remained fairly constant in recent years with changes being due mainly to typhoons damaging the wasabi beds. Japan's total yield varies from 2,000 to 3,000 tons/year.

Wasabi requires an equitable climate with optimum growth at