



NATIONAL BIOSECURITY POLICY

‘BIOSECURITY ST HELENA’

A Policy for all Members of the
St Helena Community

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	Details
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Implementing Officer	Biosecurity Officer
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Related documents	<p>Legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customs (Export and Import Control) Regulations—Section 41• Customs (Export and Import Control) Regulations—Assigned Matter: Biosecurity (in draft) <p>Policy and Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Pesticide Policy (in draft)• Biosecurity Implementation Plan

Introduction

St Helena has a limited range of existing pests and is at risk from new introductions. These can negatively impact agricultural production, human and animal health, the natural environment, tourism and sustainable development.

As an island our natural geographic barriers and limited ports of entry provide a strong measure of protection, making it easier to prevent new biosecurity threats being realised.

However, biosecurity risk is increasing globally with the expansion in trade and travel, and with changing environmental conditions resulting from climate change. Air access and development of the tourism sector on St Helena opens us up to this increased risk and the biosecurity system has to strengthen to meet the challenge in order to continue to provide protection against new pest introductions.

The Biosecurity Policy has been developed in collaboration with main stakeholders after a process of public consultation which took place over 2013. The policy sets the vision and overarching principles which guide implementation and are supported by the legal and institutional frameworks.

Abbreviations used in this document

ANRD: Agriculture and Natural Resources Division

EDC: Economic Development Committee

ENRD: Environment and Natural Resources Directorate

SHG: St Helena Government

Definitions used in this document

Biosecurity: protection against the risks posed by pests and diseases to the economy, environment and human health, via exclusion, eradication, containment and control.

Import risk assessment: a process of assessing the risk of an activity or situation, determining if the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level, and communicating the results of the risk assessment and possible mitigation measures.

Intervention: any action taken to prevent or reduce the likelihood of introduction of a new pest species.

Pest: any living organism which causes a problem to people, their structures, crops, animals and livestock, and also to the natural environment, native plants and animals.

Risk: the chance of something happening that will have an impact upon biosecurity objectives, measured in terms of both likelihood and consequences.

Risk goods: items, goods or materials which could either carry a pest species or become one itself.



Our Vision

Our national Biosecurity Vision for St Helena Island is: “to establish and implement an effective biosecurity system of shared responsibility that protects the sustainable future of our island environment, allowing a vibrant economy, safe movement of people and goods, and enhanced livelihoods and health”

The purpose of Biosecurity St Helena is to provide the framework for mitigation against the risk of introduction of new potentially harmful pests to St Helena Island. It is part of a national reform programme which will transition the current model from one focused largely on intervention at the border for agricultural imports to a risk-based approach across the biosecurity continuum based on integrating pre-border (offshore), at our border and post-border (inshore) activities.

The policy recognises that the biosecurity system contributes to environmental, economic and social outcomes and provides the primary legislative basis for SHG’s role in biosecurity. It also outlines to stakeholders how SHG will manage compliance and enforcement of its biosecurity legislation.

Boundaries

The biosecurity policy will cover the full biosecurity continuum, pre-border, border and post-border. It is not intended to cover the risks associated with Genetically Modified Organisms, animal welfare or chemical contamination, which are considered separately.

Context

We are linked to other countries through trade and the movement of people and vessels, and this network will expand further with the opening of the airport. Procedures must be internationally compliant, consistent with international obligations, achieved through adoption of international standards such as the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM)

defined by the International Plant Protection Convention.

Nationally, adoption of a comprehensive biosecurity framework supports St Helena’s long term strategic goals towards a financially independent tourism-driven economy: National Goal 1 “A vibrant economy providing opportunities for all to participate” and National Goal 3 “Effective management of the environment”.

Overarching outcomes are to:

- Biosecurity risks to St Helena’s environment, agriculture, amenity, public health and well being , including safety, are effectively managed,
- There is effective governance of St Helena’s biosecurity system through shared responsibility and roles, and responsibilities of stakeholders supporting the development of biosecurity are clearly defined and well co-ordinated.



Our Guiding Principles

We will be guided by the following principles in achieving the policy vision:

Leadership: effective biosecurity requires leadership to manage the biosecurity system.

Communication: clear, open and transparent communication so that stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities and the what, why and how of biosecurity actions.

Shared responsibility: biosecurity affects all sectors of society and is therefore everyone's responsibility.

Risk-based: decisions are based on assessment of the risk of introduction and potential harm and we are responsive to changing biosecurity risks.

Evidence-based: decisions are supported by scientific evidence sourced at the highest possible level.

Cooperation: sectors cooperate together to reduce the risks of new introductions and manage the impacts of existing ones.

Equable: biosecurity risk applies to everyone to the same extent.

Our Stakeholders

The risks of new pests potentially affect everybody on the island so everyone living or working on St Helena is a stakeholder of Biosecurity St Helena. Everyone has a role to play in protecting the island, including visitors. For example:

- Importers must be aware of and comply with import regulations.
- Visitors have a responsibility to abide by the biosecurity regulations and declare items of biosecurity concern.
- Everyone on the island should be vigilant and report anything unusual.



The Approach to be Taken

The core elements of our approach to biosecurity are:

We will work across the biosecurity continuum.

Biosecurity risk will be reduced as far as realistically possible by addressing threats all along the biosecurity continuum: off-shore through pre-border controls, at the border itself through inspections and interventions, and through post-border monitoring and surveillance with emergency response to detected incursions.



We will adopt import risk assessment.

New risk goods are subject to a formalised import risk assessment process (IRA) to determine the level of risk, identify the mitigation options and, if appropriate, define the import health standards. Biosecurity St Helena recognises that a zero risk approach is not practical and works to reduce the risk to an acceptable low level. The IRA process includes public consultation before the final decision is made.

We will adopt a white list and import health standards.

Biosecurity St Helena, like other island nations, operates a “white list” approach whereby all risk goods are prohibited except those for which import health standards have been developed to mitigate identified risks. Import health standards define the conditions under which goods can be imported and any treatments required pre-border, border or post-border.

We will take a cross-sectoral approach.

New introductions potentially threaten a number of sectors, including agriculture, environment, public health and tourism. Biosecurity decisions will therefore consider all relevant sectors.

We will work within a regulatory ethos/philosophy.

The import risk analysis process is evidence-based and adopts the precautionary principle. Where there is no identified biosecurity risk there are no restrictions to importation, and biosecurity restrictions cannot be used as a trade barrier.



Our Strategic Objectives

There are six strategic objectives to achieve the Biosecurity vision by 2020.

Improve our border protection procedures

Biosecurity St Helena works closely with Customs Officers at all ports of entry to provide an effective risk-based border protection from pest and disease incursions that pose a biosecurity threat to St Helena. Pre-border controls include the development of import health standards based on scientific assessment of biosecurity risk. Operations at the border include risk-profiling of arriving passengers, and inspections of incoming goods and produce for biosecurity threats. Responsibilities include both terrestrial and marine biosecurity threats.

Establish a post-border monitoring and surveillance programme

Pre-border and border controls will not be able to reduce the biosecurity risk to zero, there always exists the possibility of pest species stowing away, hitchhiking or being smuggled in. Post-border monitoring and surveillance is aimed at detecting and eradicating new pest incursions before they establish, through emergency response procedures.

Biosecurity St Helena also has a role in the management of invasive species which have already established post-border through activities such as internal biosecurity measures.

Promote support and advocacy

All people living, working and visiting St Helena have a role to play in protecting the island. Through a combination of training, education and communication a well informed and cooperative public will be achieved, who are aware of and supportive of biosecurity measures, engage and

participate in pre-border and border procedures, and are active in post border monitoring. Good working relations and cooperation with importers, exporters and overseas government agencies is also essential for effective border protection.

Manage data and information

Data collection, management and analysis systems will be in place to quantify and monitor biosecurity outcomes and provide the evidence-base for risk assessment. Up-to-date databases will be accessible to decision makers, the general public and internationally, as appropriate, containing data on importation of risk goods, quarantine pest interceptions and invasive species management.

Establish appropriate legislation and regulation

Comprehensive and up-to-date biosecurity legislation provides the framework for Biosecurity St Helena, harmonised nationally and in-line with international biosecurity standards, with clear mechanisms for compliance and enforcement. New biosecurity regulations will be drafted, as an assigned matter under the Customs (Export and Import Control) Regulations Section 41, with the aim of ensuring protection of agricultural production, the economy, the environment and social well-being.

Strengthen our capacity

Adequate human resources, facilities and finances must be in place to deliver this biosecurity protection, enabling sufficient trained staff effectively equipped with appropriate materials and facilities to fulfil all biosecurity functions at pre-border, border and post-border levels.

Compliance and Enforcement

Most people want to comply with biosecurity regulations, but there is always a smaller group who actively attempt to smuggle risk goods, for one reason or another, and there is a continuous gradation between these two extremes. The table below identifies the four main approaches identified along the compliance continuum.

At one end, people who want to comply only need to be informed of the regulations and given the opportunity to comply for them to respond. At the other end, enforcement tools such as spot fines, seizures and prosecution are required.

How We Will Help Stakeholders Comply

A well informed and aware community who understand the biosecurity risks associated with imported goods is a compliant community. Biosecurity St Helena will implement a comprehensive communications strategy with activities directed at the different target groups to encourage compliance. This includes providing access to necessary information to help stakeholders understand biosecurity requirements and legislation, and providing timely advice. Measures included in the strategy include information leaflets, strategic awareness posters, media updates, and promotional goods.



The Institutional Framework

ANRD is the lead agency for Biosecurity St Helena, with the Head of ANRD as the Authorised Officer under the Customs Ordinance. The Head or his/her designated officer has the authority to approve import licences, and to initiate emergency response procedures in the event of an incursion.

As biosecurity is a cross-sectoral issue a coordination mechanism will be established for decision making, including representatives of agriculture, environment and other relevant sectors together with key stakeholders, depending on the particular issue.

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) approves new import health standards and revisions to existing ones, defining the conditions under which permitted risk goods can be imported. In addition, the EDC has the authority to approve changes in the overall quarantine procedures and operations in response to changing biosecurity risk profiles. Legislation will be endorsed by Legislative Council.

Who Will Pay?

Biosecurity is a core government function and SHG is responsible for ensuring appropriate levels of staff and provision of adequate quarantine and inspection facilities at ports of entry.

Under the revised legislation importers and passengers will be charged for any mitigation actions undertaken at ports of entry on risk goods for which quarantine pests are detected. These actions may include pesticide treatment, quarantining or destruction. Applications for import of materials and goods which require an import risk assessment (for example, new species of plant material for propagation or new species of livestock) will also incur a fee.

It is not anticipated that importers will be charged for inspection of imported goods due to the already high overheads on imports and negative socio-economic impact of further charges to the consumer.



Implementation and Measuring Performance

The biosecurity policy guides the action of all stakeholders on biosecurity issues. Implementation will be delivered through organisation work plans in Agriculture, Environment and Public Health sectors, and overseen through a biosecurity implementation plan. A set of milestones and performance indicators will be developed in order to track progress in delivering the objectives.





Agriculture and Natural Resources
Division

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