

Role of Quarantine in the Introduction of New Planting Materials in Papua New Guinea

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INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a developing country in agriculture. Eighty percent of the rural population directly depend upon agriculture. The country grows both local as well as introduced crops for food. Introduction of new crops or new varieties of existing crops become important in order to search for higher yielding types with resistance to pest and disease attack. Import of new planting materials is done by the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, other research institutes and also the general public. The government departments and the research institutes import for evaluation of new crop varieties for future introduction. The general public import for personal use or commercial cultivation.

Whenever new planting materials are imported from overseas there are certain procedures and conditions that have to be followed. These are known as plant quarantine regulations. These regulations are governed by the Quarantine Act and the Plant Disease and Control Act. The main objective of these Acts is to prevent the entry of new pests and diseases from other countries and also prevent the spread of a new disease from one place to another within Papua New Guinea. This article is written to explain the role and purpose of quarantine for the benefit of those people who intend to import planting materials into PNG.

HISTORY OF QUARANTINE

The term quarantine (Italian = *quarantina*) means a forty day period. Originally it was applied to the period of detention (compulsory delay) of ships from countries subject to epidemic diseases of man. The ship's crew and passengers were forced to remain in isolation for forty days to detect any disease symptoms before they were allowed to leave the ship. This type of detention was first introduced in the fourteenth century in the Mediterranean area and later adopted by different countries. As the years went by the quarantine measures were carried over from human diseases to animal diseases and finally to cover protective efforts for

exclusion of pests and diseases of agricultural crops. Thus the plant quarantine came into effect. In general the main aim of quarantine was to establish barriers against spreading of serious diseases by compulsion or restriction (legislation).

The term plant quarantine can be defined as a legally constituted authority for utilization of knowledge to exclude the entry or spread of serious diseases of crop plants in the interest of the social and economic status of the country.

RECOMMENDED QUARANTINE PROCEDURES

Import of planting materials are generally in the form of seeds, nursery stock (seedlings, slips, cuttings, layers, runners, budwood or other vegetative material used for propagation), tubers, bulbs and tissue cultures.

1. The importer should consider whether the planting material that he intends to import is already available in PNG.
2. All imports should be through the Plant Quarantine Service of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock.
3. The importer should apply for permission on the prescribed form giving all the details of the import. Application forms should be obtained from the Plant Quarantine Service, Department of Agriculture & Livestock.
4. The quantity of planting materials to be imported should be restricted to the smallest amount possible or as advised by the Chief Quarantine Officer.
5. Applications are screened before the import is approved.
6. The pest and disease status of the exporting country need to be determined and where a potential danger exists the import is either banned or special measures are taken to eliminate the risk of introducing exotic diseases into PNG.

7. All imports of planting material should enter PNG under a permit and also accompanied by a plant health (phytosanitary) certificate from the exporting country certifying apparent freedom from pests and diseases and the treatment given at the source of origin.

8. On arrival in PNG the consignment is examined by the quarantine officers for the presence or symptoms of pests and diseases. If found necessary the consignment will be subjected to further treatments before releasing to the importer.

9. In certain cases it becomes necessary to hold the imported planting materials in the post-entry quarantine to check for the presence of foreign diseases. Plants are detained for a period of time until the quarantine officer is satisfied that the plants are safe to be released for field planting.

10. For some crop species where import is not safe, because of lack of proper diagnostic service in the country of origin, it is preferred that the plants should undergo intermediate quarantine for a period of time in a country where the crop is not of economic importance and facilities to detect the pest and disease infestation are available. On arrival in PNG these plants again undergo post-entry quarantine before releasing to the importer.

11. Once the plants are released from the post-entry quarantine it is the responsibility of the importer to transport them to the site of planting as soon as possible. If plants are not removed within seven days or no pre-arrangement is made they will be destroyed.

12. Where bulk import of seeds for planting is permitted it should undergo seed cleaning and other treatments as determined by the Plant Quarantine Service.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information and advice you should contact:

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Copies of this Plant Pathology Note can be obtained from:

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