



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

Authorization of Entities and Conflict of Interest

Australian Case Study



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Introduction

- Australia's biosecurity system operates using both government employed staff and NPPO authorised personnel
- The industry personnel authorised by the NPPO and are trained, assessed and audited by the NPPO
- As part of this – conflict of interest is MANAGED
 - Australia considers no conflict of interest is ideal, but often impractical or unachievable
 - As such, identification and management of real or perceived conflicts is more appropriate

Authorised Officer (AO) program (plant area)

- In the Australian Government run Authorised Officer (AO) program, conflict of interest is managed from the application stage
 - This affects the audit schedule of the AOs (with those with conflicts audited as a priority)
- AOs are protected by legislation to ensure they:
 - cannot be compromised
 - are able to perform duties authorised to perform
- Used in export for a variety of plant commodities e.g. grain, table grapes, pome and stonefruit, citrus (<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/table-of-authorized-officer-job-functions.pdf>)

Other systems (seafood, egg, dairy)

- Other sectors use differing systems but they remain underpinned by the same principles
 - Approval
 - Management of conflict of interest
 - Competency (training)
 - Assurance
 - Reporting



- Auditors from industry and state/territory governments are all considered “third parties”.

Assurance (AO program)

- Regional Assurance Managers (RAMs) employed to provide:
 - Strengthened relationships with AOs (can identify new/emerging conflicts of interest)
 - Additional support to AOs and employers to manage these
 - Additional oversight to supplement routine audit

New initiatives

- The system is under a regime of continuous improvement
- Streamlined auditing
 - Auditing of AOs and their employer establishments at the same time
- Strengthening legislation - Export Control Act review
 - Stronger obligations to express conflicts of interest (financial or otherwise)
 - Ongoing obligations clarified
 - Civil and criminal penalties arise from failure to comply

Benefits of using AOs

- Reduced costs:
 - NPPO staff not required to be located remotely
 - Phytosanitary actions may not be full time load
- Provides access to specific expertise
- NPPO resources reallocated to audit and oversight of the system

More information

- Authorised Officer program
 - <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/export/controlled-goods/plants-plant-products/ao>

