

Samoa – an international leader in container hygiene

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) approached several Pacific Island shippers about two years ago to discuss the need to better manage biosecurity risks entering New Zealand on empty sea containers from Pacific Island countries.

Since then, Pacific Direct Line, Reef Shipping, Pacific Forum Line, Polynesian Shipping Line and Sofrana Shipping Line have banded together and agreed to set up an offshore sea container hygiene system in Samoa.

Two container cleaning facilities in Samoa were certified in December last year as having met MAFBNZ requirements to effectively manage biosecurity risks for sea containers destined for New Zealand.

The container hygiene system ensures containers are cleaned thoroughly, pest populations are controlled at container processing and storage areas and quality management systems are set up for ongoing monitoring. The system is operated by shipping lines and agents, pest control consultants, container cleaning facilities and the Samoan Port Authority.

To facilitate the implementation of these industry-led offshore systems, MAFBNZ appointed National Sea Container Co-ordinator Bridget Roberts as a dedicated person to provide efficient data management, stakeholder liaison and co-ordination of MAFBNZ inspections nationally.

Ms Roberts visited Samoa in August to assist in auditing the hygiene system. She carried out checks to ensure all facets of the system were operating as documented, that pest populations were suppressed and cleaned containers were not being re-contaminated.

“MAFBNZ has been closely monitoring the cleanliness of containers to determine the effectiveness of the hygiene system. This initially involves six-sided inspections of all empty containers arriving in New Zealand from Samoa,” Ms Roberts says.

MAFBNZ has completed analysis for the three-month period ending 31 August, and is pleased that both cleaning yards in Samoa have met the high standards required.

“Shipping lines that process containers through these facilities will be rewarded with a 50 percent drop in inspection rates of their containers in New Zealand and if system compliance continues, inspections could drop as low as 10 percent,” Ms Roberts says.

Other benefits include long-term reductions in the number of fumigations and New Zealand-based container washes, reduced port congestion and increased efficiency of the supply chain.

“Most importantly, such offshore systems reduce the number of costly incursions of biosecurity pests such as invasive ants and Giant African Snails.

“Shipping lines operating out of Samoa now join those in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in having implemented arguably the world’s best practice in sea container biosecurity risk management.”

Ms Roberts says MAFBNZ is keen to facilitate the uptake of similar systems



MAFBNZ National Sea Container Co-ordinator Bridget Roberts visited Samoa in August to assist in auditing the offshore sea container hygiene system.

with shipping lines in other countries where biosecurity pests and contamination prevent container cleanliness.

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