



press clip

Biosecurity skills need upgrade

QUARANTINE officers, researchers and agricultural field staff from Papua New Guinea arrived in Melbourne this week to improve their biosecurity skills and knowledge.

The six visitors, from a mix of Papua New Guinean government and industry organisations, will be attending a two-week workshop to improve their understanding of how the Australian biosecurity system works and gain specific skills in plant pest detection and diagnosis.

The workshop is the result of a partnership between ATSE Crawford Fund, the Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity (CRCNPB) and Plant Health Australia, and is hosted by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

"By sharing our own knowledge on biosecurity practices with our neighbours and helping them protect their agricultural industries and food supply, we are also protecting Australian farmers, by increasing the likelihood of key pests and diseases being identified and dealt with before reaching Australia," said Dr Tony Gregson.

Dr Gregson is chairman of the boards of the Crawford Fund's Victoria Program, Plant Health Australia, Bioersity



International, and the Molecular Plant Breeding CRC. Dr Gregson has also recently been invited to join an ATSE Crawford Fund taskforce investigating the impacts of world food prices and food shortages. He opened the workshop on Tuesday.

"At a time when there is a lot of media coverage about the threats to agriculture

from climate change and the perilous state of food security in many parts of the world, this workshop will help protect food crops in Papua New Guinea, which will have a flow on effect to the wider region," Dr Gregson said.

"This workshop also demonstrates the benefits of partnering across government and the private sector to deliver solutions. High levels of government and industry cooperation have been a crucial part of Australia's recipe for success in managing pest and disease threats and maintaining an outstanding plant health status internationally. There is growing interest around the world in Australia's approach to biosecurity and I am delighted that the ATSE Crawford Fund, Plant Health Australia and the Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity have been able to find a way to share some of our knowledge and experience with our nearest northern neighbour."

"I see distinct benefits for Australia too. By working with countries like Papua New Guinea and sharing information, nationally and globally, we are better able to minimise the risk of pest incursions and the potentially devastating effect they can have on Australia's \$22.2 billion agricultural industry."