



# The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Deputy Prime Minister Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

26 July 2017

#### Ten year RIFA eradication commitment

- **The Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity review report was released today at the Agriculture Ministers' Forum, held in Melbourne.**
- **Agricultural ministers committed to a 10-year eradication program for red imported fire ants (RIFA) in south-east Queensland.**
- **The estimated cost of the proposed 10-year RIFA eradication plan is \$380 million (indexed at \$411.4 million), of which the Australian Government will pay half.**

Agricultural Ministers today welcomed a further ten year commitment, by all governments, in a shared effort to eradicate Red Imported Fire Ants in south-east Queensland.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, welcomed the agreement, made at the Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) meeting in Melbourne, where he was represented by Assistant Minister Anne Ruston.

"Today's additional ten year agreement by all governments is a successful outcome and commits an estimated further \$380 million to the plan—or \$411.4 million on an indexed basis—following sixteen years of shared eradication and containment efforts," Minister Joyce said.

"I am now calling on the Queensland Government to deliver the goods to eradicate this insidious pest once and for all and ensure this investment is wise money spent.

"A permanent steering committee will be established to oversee the program and provide increased governance and transparency, with an independent chair to be appointed by the National Biosecurity Committee later this year.

"Reports from the public have accounted for up to 70 per cent of new detections over the last four years, and the steering committee will ensure that community and stakeholder engagement continues to be an important part of the program.

"In the US state of Texas alone, Red Imported Fire Ants are estimated to cost US\$1.2 billion each year in control, damage repair and medical care and there have been more than 85 deaths from anaphylactic shock as a result of stings.

"Based on the rate of natural spread in the United States, without these efforts, RIFA could potentially have spread past Sydney in the south and Rockhampton in the north.

“We know if fire-ants become established in this area, it won’t just be the loss to the environment and agriculture, but also the loss of lives, and the change in our recreational standard of living.”

Agriculture Ministers also welcomed the findings of the review into the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, which placed a strong emphasis on trade access and environmental biosecurity.

“I welcome the commitment by all governments to work together to build a national system that can meet the challenges of the future. This report offers an important road map,” Minister Joyce said.

“Our efforts will deliver particular benefits for our primary producers, the farmers and fishers who work every day to put food on our tables and clothes on our back.

#### **Fast facts**

- **Over the course of the 10-year RIFA eradication plan, the \$380 million investment will deliver a nominal investment of \$411.4 million with indexation.**
- **Work has already begun on a number of the IGAB review report recommendations.**
- **The report is a roadmap for Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, industry and the community to improve Australia’s biosecurity system over the next five to 10 years.**
- **ABARES have found the national biosecurity system can save farmers up to \$17,500 per farm per year.**
- **AGMIN established a permanent steering committee to oversight the Program. An independent chair will be appointed by the National Biosecurity Committee later this year.**
  - **The Steering Committee will undertake regular monitoring and evaluation to facilitate improvements across the life of the program. It will ensure the program receives the appropriate level of support and guidance and will provide clear accountability and transparency.**
- **The Coalition Government has already provided over \$150 million on containment and eradication activities for this insidious pest.**