



Greenlife Industry Australia

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### \$5 million invested in nursery production biosecurity project over 5 years to protect Australia from plant pests and diseases

**12 February 2021** – Over \$5 million is set to be invested into a new project over the next 5 years seeking to shore up Australia's defence against endemic and exotic plant pests and assist in maintaining business sustainability and continuity in the face of emerging risks. Funded by Hort Innovation using nursery R&D levy funds, this new project, *NY20001 – National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program*, will be led by John McDonald, National Biosecurity Manager, Greenlife Industry Australia.

This five-year project will equip the nursery industry with the knowledge and skills to manage, mitigate and recover from plant pest and disease incursions, adapt to climate change risks and protect the livelihood of millions of Australians by producing healthy stock for agriculture and horticulture industries and urban greening.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates up to 40 per cent of global food crops are lost every year due to plant pests and diseases. As the provider of seedlings, young and mature plants to the national food, fibre, foliage and forestry supply chains, the nursery industry is on our front line of defence when it comes to protecting the integrity of Australia's biosecurity system and the agricultural economy.

This new project will continue to improve industry resilience to emerging threats with an emphasis on raising industry awareness and adoption of best management practices for plant protection, biosecurity and sustainable plant production.

In addition, the project will see the industry continue to have technical input, sharing nursery production R&D information, into important national committees with organisations such as Plant Health Australia, the national Plant Health Committee and National Biosecurity Roundtables to ensure cross-industry collaboration to benefit all Australians.

Ultimately, the project will see increased biosecurity preparedness across the entire nursery industry and improved plant protection outcomes. Secondary industries along nursery stock supply chains to benefit include horticulture, agriculture, residential, commercial and industrial landscaping and the greenlife retail supply chain.

Crucial to the success of this new project will be the continued mobilisation of a network of plant protection officers. These experts in plant health and biosecurity are engaging with production nurseries in every Australian state or territory to improve the plant protection protocols across the country.

Specifically, they will be working with production nurseries to provide on-site support for implementation of key plant protection, biosecurity and production sustainability programs such as the Australian Plant Production Standard, the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, EcoHort and BioSecure HACCP.

According to Mr McDonald, the new project is a result of the groundwork established during the successful previous 5 year project, National Nursery Industry Biosecurity Program (NY15004) and extensive consultation with stakeholders. NY15004 has been heralded as an impactful, successful project which greatly improved Australia's plant biosecurity credentials.

"In planning for this new project, Hort Innovation and nursery industry representatives consulted growers, industry leaders, researchers, and state and federal government stakeholders. It's been a truly collaborative effort," said Mr McDonald.

**Hort  
Innovation**  
Strategic levy investment

**NURSERY  
FUND**

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)



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“The Australian nursery industry is a national leader in best management practice, plant biosecurity and plant protection, at both a strategic and grower level.

“However, with the unprecedented level of risk industry faces from emerging, exotic and endemic plant pests as well as climate change, access to water, government regulations and international trade, production nurseries need advanced resources, implementation guidance and support to continue to stay ahead of these risks. This new, nursery R&D levy-funded project looks to keep the nursery industry at the forefront of plant protection, biosecurity and sustainable production to help maintain a profitable horticulture sector.”

Throughout the lifetime of previous projects several significant outcomes were achieved including the establishment of BioSecure HACCP, the first ever nationally recognised and government approved third-party plant biosecurity scheme in Australia, enabling growers to mitigate plant protection and biosecurity risks on farm and streamline interstate plant trade across the country through consignment self-certification.

John McDonald and his team have also provided technical support to industry, visiting over 1000 growers over the past five years as part of previous projects. The team has also participated in the decision making processes for more than 150 exotic plant pest incursions resulting in management or eradication.

Major investments have been allocated to industry priorities including; biosecurity and plant protection training in Northern Australia, additional pest data/images into the electronic pest identification platform, developed a virtual reality (VR) crop monitoring training module and the digitisation of grower crop management record templates for smartphone/tablet use in-field.

In addition, the industry’s focus on plant protection has also helped mitigate the impact of recent pest incursions such as Citrus canker, Tomato potato psyllid, Serpentine leafminer and Fall armyworm and to prepare if *Xylella fastidiosa* arrives in Australia, all of which have the potential to devastate Australian host plants and crops.

Dr Alison Anderson, General Manager Research & Development, Hort Innovation said that the investment is a critical project for delivering on biosecurity strategies for the Australian horticulture industry over the next five years.

“The Australian horticulture industry is valued at around \$15.1 billion (2019/20), with the nursery industry representing a significant (\$2.56 billion) component of the sector,” she said.

“This is a strategic investment that will work with other biosecurity initiatives in Australia to ensure the greatest possible protection for the entire horticulture industry, Australian agriculture and the economy.”

## ENDS

*The ‘National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program (NY20001) project is funded by Hort Innovation using nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government.*