

Stakeholder advisory – MAF trials new verification approach to managing biosecurity risk posed by empty sea containers

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAF) is phasing in a new approach to managing the clearance of empty sea containers into New Zealand. The new process, to meet requirements set out in the revised Sea Container Import Health Standard (IHS), will ultimately see MAF focus on verifying that empty containers are compliant with biosecurity requirements. The inspection rates of empty sea containers will vary based on demonstrated compliance over time

This move fits within a wider five year programme to improve the management of biosecurity risk through the border. The new system will place greater emphasis on using data, information and technology to enable effective risk profiling and the targeting of resources to meet the areas of greatest risk and importance. This approach will not reduce biosecurity protection, but rather see a strengthening of attention to the areas of greatest need.

The sea container IHS requires shipping lines to provide advance information on container condition and under the new rules, non-compliant containers (without documentation submitted within the 12 hours prior to arrival timeframe) will be subjected to six-sided and internal inspections.

MAF recognises that implementing the new requirements has the potential to create logistical issues, including delays and congestion at ports if large numbers of inspections are required.

To ensure that the new system will work effectively, with a manageable workload and no unnecessary delays, an operational trial will be held throughout September.

Under the trial, five percent of empty sea containers from all countries and shipping lines (excluding Pacific islands and Sea Container Hygiene System participants) will be inspected by MAF. Information provided by shipping lines will be used to identify containers for inspection in advance of their arrival to minimise unnecessary movements and disruption on the port. The trial will provide verification data on the actual level of risk posed by empties, and help determine the best way to provide incentives for improved compliance with the border standard. It will also establish the information and systems required to enable MAF to focus its attention on those areas considered the highest risk.

The trial runs from **1 – 30 September** and is at four ports across the country: **Auckland, Tauranga, Lyttelton** and **Otago**. Each port has worked closely with MAF to determine a process for the trial period.

If you have any questions about the trial or new verification approach period please contact Bronwynne Kwok (bronwynne.kwok@maf.govt.nz or 09 909 8602).