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Regulation and Management of Fumigations through the Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS)

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The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) relies on effective methyl bromide fumigation treatments to address quarantine risks associated with imported cargo (including wooden packing and materials).

The Australian Fumigation Accreditation Scheme (AFAS) was established to address ineffective fumigation performance.

At present, AFAS has been fully implemented in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Full implementation in the Philippines and Papua New Guinea is expected in late 2008 and in the People's Republic of China in mid-2009. Singapore, Sri Lanka and New Zealand are at various stages of participation.

AFAS objectives are to:

Provide capacity building assistance to quarantine regulatory authorities to effectively monitor quarantine treatments;

Enhance compliance with Australian quarantine requirements through the registration of overseas fumigation companies that are eligible to participate in AFAS;

Facilitate trade between AFAS participating countries and Australia by ensuring that fumigation treatments are performed effectively;

Provide improved communication and feedback with participating countries to maintain compliance with AFAS requirements.

The above objectives are achieved through:

Training of overseas quarantine officials and fumigators in effective methyl bromide fumigation techniques;

Accreditation of individual fumigators who have been assessed as competent against AFAS

requirements by the quarantine regulatory authority;

Registration of AFAS approved fumigation companies by the quarantine regulatory authority, that are then eligible to perform methyl bromide fumigations on consignments bound for Australia;

Training of government officers as methyl bromide fumigation trainers to ensure sustainability of AFAS;

Training of government officers in effective auditing techniques;

Auditing of registered fumigation companies by the quarantine regulatory authority to ensure continued compliance with AFAS requirements;

Annual Joint System Reviews of AFAS operations conducted by AQIS and the relevant quarantine regulatory authority.

Benefits gained from AFAS are not only limited to trade facilitation and increased confidence in fumigation performance. A positive outcome has been the substantial reduction in the use of methyl bromide in accordance with the Montreal Protocol. AQIS has calculated that effective, first time fumigations performed under AFAS has resulted in a reduction of approximately 95 tonnes of methyl bromide alone in Indonesia and Malaysia since AFAS implementation in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

AFAS is fundamentally a management system that can and is being expanded to incorporate additional quarantine treatments such as ethylene oxide (ETO), heat treatment, and other emerging fumigation treatments such as sulfur fluoride.