

Leveraging existing pest management programmes in trade agreements

Brad M Siebert

New Zealand Avocado

With international trade increasing alongside the burgeoning threat of global priority pests, balancing the importance of trade with the need to protect plant resources requires a multi-layered and pro-active approach, rather than sole reliance on border inspections.

Alongside the importance of science-based risk assessment, governments are requiring more phytosanitary assurances by prioritising improved traceability and pre-export risk management programmes that can increase compliance through their alignment with existing industry systems.

Since 2012, the New Zealand avocado industry requires mandatory compliance from all export growers to AvoGreen®, an industry governed pest monitoring programme to manage established pest species. The scope of AvoGreen® has evolved to become more than a pest monitoring programme to justify responsible spray use to now being aligned with, and recognised within, phytosanitary export agreements. Fundamental changes in recent years have included the addition of new pests of concern, mandatory pest management actions in response to trade related pests, formalised training and accreditation of the programme by the NPPO of New Zealand.

Following the risk assessment phase of market access negotiations, the ability for industry alongside the NPPO to be proactive in presenting appropriate and universally adopted risk management options has enabled stronger recognition and better integration of existing industry systems into trade negotiations; thereby reducing the need for any novel pest management, traceability or certification programmes by the importing country.

The New Zealand avocado industry now approaches market access using the principle of ‘equivalence’ where if existing phytosanitary measures throughout the supply chain can be technically justified as having the same effect to risk reduction they should be recognised as alternatives to any new pest management requirements. The industry therefore continues to evolve the AvoGreen® programme to meet the industry’s crop protection needs while ensuring it remains a credible system of assurance and agile enough to meet any new phytosanitary requirements.

While still being internationally recognised by all export markets as a responsible approach to agrichemical use and pest management, the AvoGreen® programme has now been successfully used as an NPPO recognised, industry-level approach to meeting government phytosanitary assurances in two markets Thailand and China.

The biggest win for the grower has been the seamless integration of new market access requirements into current industry best practice; enabling production requirements that are easy to comply with and hard to ignore, whilst achieving a cost effective approach to pest management that meets the needs of both crop protection and market access.