



Brassicaceous vegetable seeds: “Review of import conditions for brassicaceous vegetable seeds for sowing”

Update: Final Report Released

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The Australian Government's draft review of import conditions for brassicaceous crop seeds for sowing into Australia, released in February 2018, proposed that imported seeds for a wide range of common vegetables would be required to be treated with a broad-spectrum systemic fungicide.

Since both Australian organic and conventional vegetable production rely heavily on imported seeds, the implications of this proposed mandatory treatment were far reaching – especially for the organic industry where synthetic agricultural chemicals such as these are prohibited.

Brassicaceous vegetable seeds produce several common vegetable varieties including Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Kale, Rocket, Brussel Sprouts, Turnip, and Kohlrabi therefore effecting a large portion of the vegetable production industry.

The draft review received nationwide media coverage, appearing in various national print and radio segments during April 2018.

Australian Organic's primary concern surrounded the integrity of organic produce locally, and potential damage to export market access. In light of this, Australian Organic, on behalf of the certified organic industry, made a [submission in response of the draft review to the Department of Agriculture on 19 April 2018](#).

An industry working group was convened and teleconferences with the Department of Agriculture received vast input from the industry and provided in-depth discussions.

Australian Organic Head of Standards, Owen Gwilliam, was also invited to speak at the Australian Seed Federation Horticultural Working Group (HWG) Mid-Year Meeting in Canberra on 26 February 2019. This provided Australian Organic with an opportunity to both attend, discuss and present upon the Brassicaceous seeds issue with industry and Senior Department of Agriculture Biosecurity representatives – solidifying Australian Organic's strong collaborative connections in both Government and the organic industry.

[Australian Organic received a response](#) to their Brassicaceous seeds submission from the Department of Agriculture, Plant Sciences and Risk Assessment on 5 September 2019. The response from the Department thoroughly considered all points raised and thoroughly reviewed Australian Organic's issues of concern.

On 13 September 2019, the Department of Agriculture released its final report into the ["Review of import conditions for brassicaceous vegetable seeds for sowing"](#).

The final report concluded: "Seeds of most brassicaceous vegetable species are not hosts of pathogens that are of biosecurity concern to Australia and therefore, do not require additional biosecurity measures. Instead, these species will continue to be subject to the department's standard import conditions for seeds for sowing."

The Brassica Oleracea species (a species affecting the largest vegetable group, including Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Kale, Brussel Sprouts, Kohlrabi etc.) has been removed entirely from the list of imported seeds that require additional biosecurity measures.

In addition to this, alternative, organic-friendly measures are now available for the other 3 species besides fungicide (see table below):

Vegetable species	Biosecurity measures			
	Fungicide ¹	Heat ²	Testing ³	Heat + Testing ⁴
<i>Brassica rapa</i> (e.g. turnips and bok choy)	✓	✓		
<i>Raphanus sativus</i> (e.g. radish)	✓			✓
<i>Eruca vesicaria</i> (e.g. rocket)	✓		✓	

1. fungicide treatment to manage *Colletotrichum higginsianum* and *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. raphani*

2. heat treatment to manage *Colletotrichum higginsianum* only

3. seed testing to detect the presence of *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. raphani* (using a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test) to help manage the risk

4. a combination of heat treatment and PCR testing to manage *Colletotrichum higginsianum* and *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. raphani*.

Source: Australian Government Department of Agriculture

Combinations of heat treatment, and testing to confirm disease free status, will now be allowed as alternative treatments.

The Department for Agriculture has also advised that it is open to allowances for alternative organic measures if they can be demonstrated to be effective in the future.

These outcomes are considered to be a huge win for the organic industry, and Australian Organic would like to make special mention to the Department of Agriculture and the Australian Seed Federation for their collaborations on this resolution.

[For more information, see the Australian Government Department of Agriculture website.](#)