



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Imported Inorganic Fertiliser Management Policy

April 2026

Imported Inorganic Fertiliser Management Policy

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We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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Introduction

Imported inorganic fertiliser presents a biosecurity risk to Australia. The *Biosecurity Act 2015* empowers the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to manage biosecurity risks at Australia's border.

The aim of this policy is to manage and mitigate the biosecurity risks associated with imported inorganic fertiliser. It outlines the governance arrangements, roles, responsibilities, actions and minimum standards for registered offshore entities to manage the biosecurity risks and compliance requirements for importing inorganic fertiliser.

Biosecurity risks can arise due to the nature in which inorganic fertiliser is sourced and imported into Australia. Consignments of inorganic fertiliser can be contaminated with biosecurity risk material such as insects, seeds, soil, other plant material or contaminants of animal and microbial origin.

Given the likelihood of the direct application of fertilisers to soil, biosecurity risks must be managed effectively across the entire supply chain. Importers are responsible for ensuring that consignments containing sourced fertiliser are free from biosecurity risk material. Imported consignments of inorganic fertiliser that do not comply with Australia's biosecurity requirements may be subject to treatment, export or destruction at the importer's expense.

This policy incentivises offshore entities registered through the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to create and maintain biosecurity contamination management strategies that will provide assurance to Australian fertiliser importers. Registered offshore entities that implement biosecurity contamination management strategies across their supply chains can help reduce the risk of exotic pests and diseases from entering and establishing in Australia. Consignments of inorganic fertiliser that are registered under this policy and meet all relevant import conditions can be assessed as low risk and therefore receive reduced biosecurity intervention on arrival in Australia.

Scope

The policy applies to:

- imported non-liquid inorganic fertiliser that is either mined or produced through a chemical process and classified under tariff chapters: 2834, 3102, 3103, 3104, 3105
- conveyances (e.g. seagoing vessels) used to transport in-ships-hold consignments of inorganic fertiliser consignments.

The policy does not apply to:

- imported liquid inorganic fertiliser
- imported fertiliser containing conditionally prohibited animal, plant, fungi, macroalgae, microalgae or microbial ingredients
- inorganic materials imported under a valid departmental import permit for further processing onshore in Australia in the making of fertiliser
- any other good which is not being imported as an 'inorganic fertiliser'.

Downloadable documents for applicants and registered entities

This policy refers to a suite of downloadable [Chemical and mined fertiliser](#) documents:

- Attachment 1: Imported inorganic fertiliser entity registration application
- Attachment 2: Independent third-party on-site audit template
- Attachment 3: Marine surveyor's vessel cleanliness inspection guidelines and certificate template
- Attachment 4: Loading sample inspection guidelines and certificate template
- Attachment 5: Manufacturer's declaration for in-ships-hold cargo template
- Attachment 6: Vessel schedule template
- Attachment 7: Manufacturer's declaration for containerised cargo template

1 Primary biosecurity risks

Import conditions for inorganic fertiliser are contained in the Biosecurity (Prohibited and Conditionally Non-prohibited Goods) Determination 2021. Learn more about compliance requirements for importers in [BICON](#).

Inorganic fertiliser:

- must arrive in Australia clean and free from biosecurity risk material
- must be accompanied by documentation attesting to the biosecurity integrity of the consignment, including both the cargo and the vessel or container (as applicable).

The DAFF [Compliance Policy](#) outlines the principles we follow during compliance activities. If importers have products that fail to meet import conditions, we may impose increased control measures, take administrative actions, pursue civil actions, or apply criminal sanctions when we suspect criminal behaviour.

The [Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030 Roadmap](#) highlights several key areas of concern that have the potential to negatively affect Australia's biosecurity. These include:

- increasing numbers of pests and diseases observed in neighbouring countries across the Indo-Pacific
- the impacts of climate change on weather patterns and the environment, leading to more dynamic and unexpected movements of biosecurity risks
- changes to the global landscape (e.g. trade agreements and population growth) resulting in increased trade and movement of people and goods into and out of Australia.

These emerging concerns may increase the likelihood of biosecurity contaminants ending up in consignments of imported inorganic fertilisers. For this reason, our regulatory frameworks and guidance materials must enable both the department and industry to collaborate and actively reduce the potential for biosecurity risks to enter and establish in Australian territory. The primary biosecurity risks associated with imported inorganic fertiliser are plant material, seeds, soil and hitchhiker pests.

1.1 Plant material and seeds

Plant material can harbour a vast range of pests and diseases. This includes pathogens such as fungi, bacteria or viruses, insect pests in all life-cycle stages, as well as nematodes in various stages of development. Plant material may also contain other biosecurity risk material, including live animals (e.g. snails), seeds classed as weeds, fungal bodies or animal faeces.

1.2 Soil

Soil can harbour contaminants such as fungi, bacteria, viruses and prions, animal faeces, live animals or crop residues. Examples of soil-borne contaminants include foot-and-mouth disease and giant African snails.

1.3 Hitchhiker pests

Hitchhiker pests such as invasive ants, insects and snails travel opportunistically on conveyances, containers and commodities.

2 Risk management and assessment

Registered offshore entities are responsible for the cleanliness of the fertiliser from point of manufacture to the point of export to Australia.

If a biosecurity officer suspects that the level of risk associated with goods subject to biosecurity control is of an unacceptable level, they may require biosecurity measures be taken (Figure 1). These biosecurity measures allow biosecurity risks to be managed to an acceptable level. Biosecurity officers have the power to require that goods be managed in a specific manner.

In some cases, measures to manage certain biosecurity risks associated with inorganic fertiliser can be conducted onshore. However, if the biosecurity risk posed is determined to be too great, the goods may require treatment, export or destruction at the importer's expense.

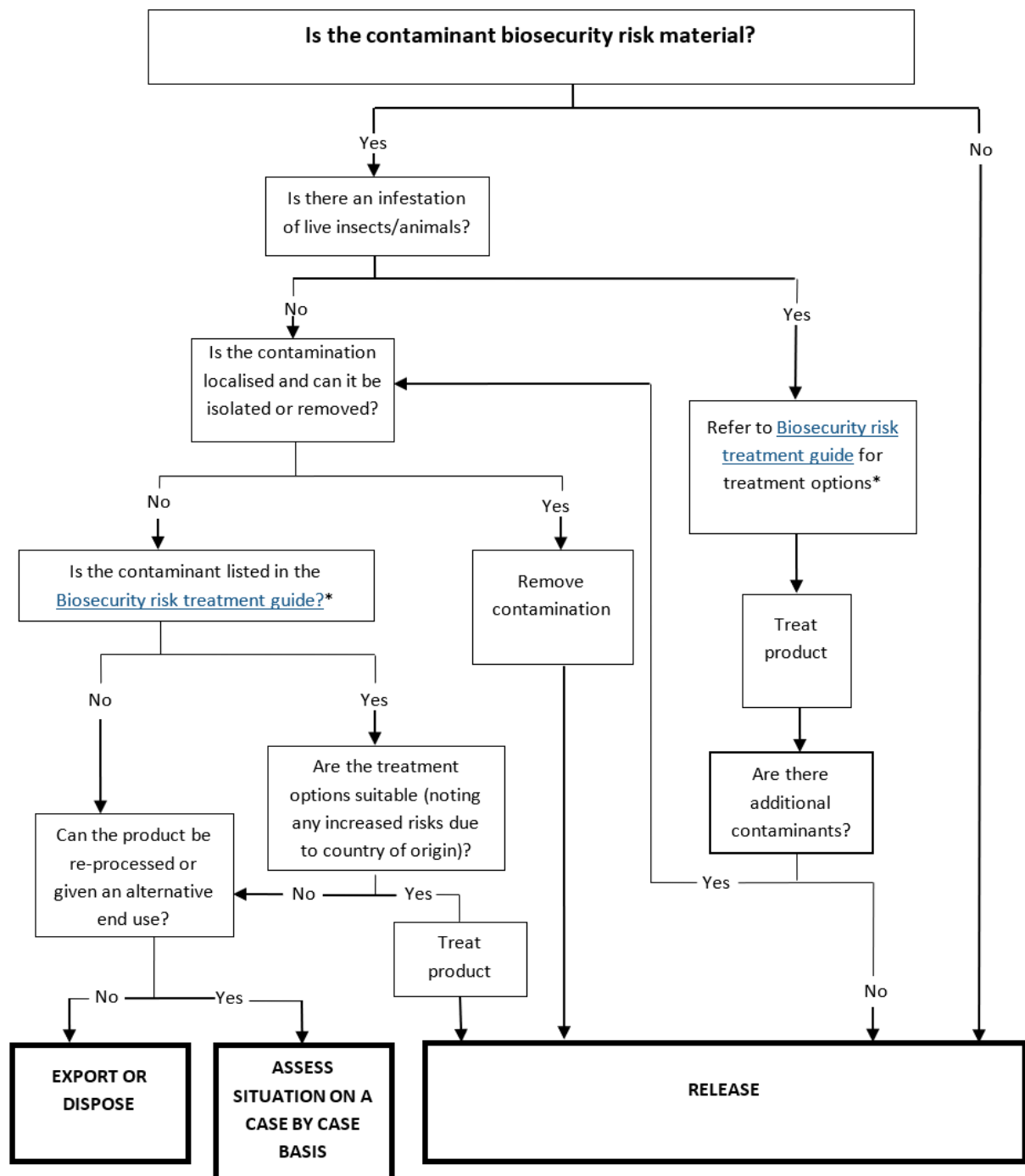
All imported inorganic fertiliser is assessed for a biosecurity risk rating prior to arrival in Australian territory. The department's risk assessment outcomes are directly influenced by the biosecurity integrity of the offshore supply chain that exports the fertiliser to Australia. The ability of an offshore entity to ensure biosecurity integrity across an offshore supply chain is confirmed by the department through an official application and assessment process. Learn more about individual risk assessment outcomes in [chapter 3](#).

If imported inorganic fertiliser consignments that originate from registered offshore entities meet the department's import conditions, they will be eligible for reduced biosecurity intervention on arrival in Australian territory.

Offshore entities can apply to become registered and receive a risk classification if they have oversight of supply chains and are able to provide documentary evidence that they meet the minimum eligibility requirements listed in [section 2.1](#). The risks classifications for consignments are:

- **Level 1, low risk** – the entity has implemented the full suite of biosecurity risk management strategies, the consignment has successfully passed import requirements and the department has a high level of confidence (via an approved audit) in the biosecurity integrity of the consignment.
- **Level 2, medium risk** – the entity has implemented the full suite of biosecurity risk management strategies and our desktop audit shows no history of non-compliant loads.
- **Level 3, high risk** – the entity has no recognised contamination management strategies in place.

Figure 1 Decision tree for management of biosecurity risk material



Note: The [Biosecurity risk treatment guide](#) requires importers to present a biosecurity risk management plan to the department that provides assurance that the risk can be effectively managed. If the management plan is insufficient to manage the risk, the goods will be directed for export or destruction. Where possible, we will offer the importer the opportunity to have seed and or plant material contamination identified to assist with management outcomes. However, identification may not go beyond genus level.

2.1 Minimum registration eligibility requirements

Before progressing to Level 2 and to Level 1, offshore entities must provide documentary evidence that demonstrates the eligibility criteria has been met. The department will verify the provided evidence against internal data and criteria.

Offshore entities unable to meet the relevant minimum eligibility requirements will be considered as unregistered (Level 3) entities. Learn more about unregistered entities in [section 2.2.8](#).

Prospective applicants should ensure that they have met all the relevant minimum eligibility requirements and application requirements before submitting an application. This includes having an independent third-party on-site audit conducted before they apply.

DAFF will not conduct a full assessment of any applications that do not meet minimum eligibility requirements. The department charges a fee for service for any assessment activities associated with an application, including incomplete applications that we are unable to fully assess.

Learn more about fees and charges in [section 2.3](#).

2.2 Registration

2.2.1 Application requirements

Offshore entities that have oversight of supply chains and meet the relevant minimum eligibility requirements can apply for Level 2 classification by:

- completing [Attachment 1 Imported inorganic fertiliser entity registration application](#)
- undergoing an on-site audit conducted by an independent third-party auditor.

Learn more about Level 2 independent third-party on-site audits in [section 2.2.2](#).

The successful application and registration will apply to a single offshore entity that supplies or exports approved fertiliser from a single manufacturer and covers all shipping combinations (in-ships-hold, containerised, loose and bagged) used by the offshore entity for the export of inorganic fertiliser to Australia. Separate entity registration that is part of a supply chain will only be considered if there is a strong business case to do so.

Applicants should submit one form only for the initial application. We do not require separate applications for each cargo and shipping method type. For variations to applications, see [section 2.4](#).

Applications must be supported by an Australian-based and registered company, known as the sponsor. The sponsor is the contact point for the department for any matters relating to the registered entity and supply chain, including the application process, and where registration is granted, the ongoing maintenance and compliance of that registration.

Manufacturers and suppliers of all goods exported to Australia are responsible for the cleanliness of those goods from manufacture to loading. This policy encourages entities to register the supply chain management of their product. Registration of compliant entities safely reduces the levels of intervention required while at the same time ensuring that biosecurity risk is managed appropriately.

We will not consider applications based on load ports or storage facility locations alone, unless there is a strong business case to do so. Applications will only be considered from offshore entities that

have an appropriate level of biosecurity risk management strategies throughout the supply chain, from the point of manufacture or source through to the point of export to Australia.

The submission of an application does not guarantee successful Level 2 registration of a prospective applicant. Each application is assessed on an individual basis. We will determine whether the information and documentation provided satisfies the application requirements.

2.2.2 Registration audit requirements: Level 2

Prospective applicants seeking Level 2 registration must have an independent third-party on-site audit conducted on all elements of the offshore entity's supply-chain biosecurity risk management system. The applicant must include a copy of the audit report and supporting documentation with their application form.

Prospective applicants should have an independent third-party on-site audit conducted if they are confident that they can meet the relevant minimum eligibility and application documentary requirements.

DAFF charges a fee for service for any assessment activities associated with applications, regardless of the applicant's eligibility.

Learn more about:

- fees and charges in [section 2.3](#).
- requirements for the independent third-party on-site audit in [Attachment 2: Independent third-party on-site audit template](#).

Audits must be conducted by a qualified third-party auditor who is independent from the entity or supply chain being audited, the importer and the department. The third-party auditor must have relevant qualifications and accreditations and be registered with an internationally recognised audit accreditation body. An example of an acceptable international standard is ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.

Email application forms and supporting documentation (including a third-party audit report) in English to our Audit and Assurance Branch at AuditServices@aff.gov.au.

We will conduct a desktop assessment of the application, third-party audit and supporting documentation to determine suitability for registration. Processing takes up to 6 weeks (30 working days), from receipt of a complete Level 2 registration application.

We reserve the right to conduct department-led on-site audits of offshore entities if we determine that such activities are necessary for the registration of that entity.

2.2.3 Registration agreement for successful applications: Level 2

Following assessment and acceptance of the application and supporting documentation by the department, successful applicants are required to enter into a registration agreement with the department and complete a *Registration agreement form*. We will provide applicants with a copy of this form following completion of the application assessment process.

The registration agreement requires registered offshore entities to:

- agree to meeting and maintaining its obligations under the policy, including
 - ongoing auditing requirements
 - ensuring the biosecurity integrity of all consignments of inorganic fertiliser it exports to Australia
 - advising the department of any changes that may affect the biosecurity integrity management of the entity's exported inorganic fertiliser consignments
 - advising the department if it no longer wishes to be registered
 - in the event of a contamination incident, complying with the department's non-compliance investigation requests
- acknowledge that the department may withdraw the entity's registration and/or may impose increased intervention on consignments of imported inorganic fertiliser originating from the registered offshore entity, when deemed appropriate.

When DAFF receives the completed *Registration agreement form*, we will:

- provide written confirmation to the applicant regarding the successful registration outcome
- apply Level 2 classification for reduced biosecurity intervention to consignments originating from the Level 2 registered entity – provided all other import conditions are also met.

If an entity's *Registration agreement form* is incomplete, we will issue the applicant with an 'Unsuccessful application outcome'. The entity will not be registered and will therefore be classified as Level 3.

2.2.4 Unsuccessful application outcomes

If we are unable to complete an application assessment and/or an application assessment is completed but does not result in a successful application outcome, we will issue the applicant with an 'Unsuccessful application outcome'.

Offshore entities that receive an unsuccessful application outcome are not eligible for Level 2 registration under the policy. They will be considered Level 3 until they can meet all outstanding application, documentary and/or eligibility requirements. We will advise the applicant of any outstanding requirements that the applicant must meet to be reconsidered for Level 2 registration and will work with them to address these shortcomings.

Inorganic fertiliser can still be imported into Australia from an unregistered Level 3 entity. However, these consignments will be subject to increased biosecurity intervention on arrival.

Learn more about unregistered entities in [section 2.2.8](#).

2.2.5 Qualifying for registration: Level 1

Before qualifying for Level 1 registration, prospective offshore entities:

- must be able to provide documentary evidence that they have oversight of the biosecurity risk management systems of the offshore supply chain (or the sections they have oversight of)
- must meet these minimum eligibility requirements

- have exported a minimum of 3 containerised or 1 in-ships-hold consignments of inorganic fertiliser to Australia within the previous 2-year period
- have exported to Australia a combined minimum volume of 2 holds or 25 twenty-foot equivalent unit containers within the previous 2-year period
- have had no instances of biosecurity risk material detected in the qualifying imported inorganic fertiliser consignments.

Australian sponsors must email evidence of the successful imports to our Audit and Assurance Branch at AuditServices@aff.gov.au. If we determine that the required imports have been achieved, we will issue a Level 1 certificate to the offshore entity.

When an entity qualifies for Level 1 classification, we:

- provide the registered entity with an entity identifier (AEI) that must be included on all documentation issued by the registered entity relevant to consignments managed under the policy
- provide the registered entity with an official departmental certificate confirming the registration of that entity under the policy
- publish the registered offshore entity's registration details on our [Chemical and mined fertiliser](#) webpage, including
 - manufacturer, supplier or offshore entity name and AEI
 - contact details
 - approved fertiliser types
 - manufacturer, supplier or offshore entity's physical address
 - loading location (ports or country).

Offshore registered entities that do not consent to their details being published can indicate their wish to opt out in Section C of the [Attachment 1: Imported inorganic fertiliser entity registration application](#).

2.2.6 Maintaining registration: Level 1

For a Level 1 registered offshore entity to maintain its registered status, it must:

- ensure all exported consignments of inorganic fertiliser exported to Australia comply with relevant importing conditions
- ensure all consignments of inorganic fertiliser arrive in Australia clean and free from biosecurity risk material
- pass an independent on-site third-party audit ([section 2.2.7](#)), which will be requested by the department on an as-needed basis.

Level 1 Gold Status is provided to offshore entities with at least 10 continuously compliant loads over 5 years.

A registered offshore entity may withdraw its registration status voluntarily at any time.

2.2.7 Ongoing audit requirements: Level 1 and Level 2

To maintain Level 1 and Level 2 registration, registered offshore entities must pass periodic independent third-party on-site audits conducted on all elements of their supply chain biosecurity risk management practices and provide a copy of the associated audit report to the department for desktop assessment.

We will request audit reports from independent third-party auditors on an as-needed basis. When requested, audit reports presented to us will be the most recent audit conducted and no older than 12 months from the date of request. We will advise registered offshore entities and sponsors when audits are to be submitted. Audits must be completed within 6 months of the notification to enable sponsors to co-ordinate and group their audits efficiently.

Learn more about requirements for the third-party on-site audits in [Attachment 2: Independent third-party on-site audit template](#).

Email completed audit reports and any supporting documentation in English to our Audit and Assurance Branch at AuditServices@aff.gov.au. We will conduct a desktop assessment of the audit report to determine the suitability of the entity to maintain its registration.

Processing takes up to 6 weeks (30 working days), from receipt of the complete audit report.

2.2.8 Unregistered entity: Level 3

Consignments from unregistered entities are considered Level 3 and receive increased biosecurity intervention on arrival in Australia.

There are no maintenance requirements (e.g. audits) for unregistered supply chains. However, consignments must meet all relevant departmental import conditions listed in [BICON](#).

2.3 Fees and charges

Our assessment of applications and audits (including desktop audits) is a cost-recovered activity. We require the offshore entity, directly or via their sponsor, to enter into a service-level agreement (SLA) with the department.

A copy of the SLA will be provided to the sponsor or offshore entity following submission of an application and/or upon notification of a required audit. The SLA must be completed in English and signed before we can assess a Level 2 registration application and/or independent third-party audit report.

The department will charge for all assessment activities it conducts, regardless of the outcome. Our fees and charges are applied in accordance with the [current charging guidelines](#). Additional costs may be incurred if documents supplied to the department are incomplete or in a format that cannot be accessed, in which case, we will also suspend the desktop audit.

2.3.1 Department-led on-site audits

If we determine that a department-led on-site audit is necessary, we will discuss the requirements for an on-site audit with the entity or sponsor, including all associated fees and charges. On-site audits are fully cost recovered by the department, including travel and accommodation.

We will provide the entity or sponsor with an SLA that must be completed before we undertake the audit.

2.4 Change in circumstances

Level 1 and Level 2 registered offshore entities must email our Sea Cargo Policy section at SeaCargoPolicy@aff.gov.au at least 15 business days prior to the proposed date of any changes to their operational circumstances that may directly or indirectly affect their ability to maintain compliance with this policy. We will decide whether the change in circumstances requires another third-party audit.

Examples of changes to operational circumstances includes changes in:

- ownership, management or control
- facility locations
- contact personnel details
- operational procedures such as:
 - addition of other fertiliser lines or product types
 - fertiliser processing equipment or processes
 - changes in types of goods managed or handled in any facility (e.g. goods of animal, fungal, plant and/or microbial origin)
 - changes in loading or storage processes or facilities (e.g. use of alternative storage facilities, different fertiliser types being stored in the same storage facility)
- ceasing operation (e.g. the entity is no longer operating or exporting).

3 Consignment risk assessment

We perform a risk assessment of imported inorganic fertiliser on a per-consignment or vessel hold basis, as applicable. Risk assessments result in a risk rating of Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 being applied to each consignment or vessel hold. The risk rating determines the level of biosecurity intervention that we will apply to the consignments and any associated vessel holds on arrival.

Risk ratings do not apply to:

- consignments and vessel holds transporting imported liquid inorganic fertiliser
- consignments of inorganic fertiliser being imported under a valid departmental import permit for further processing onshore.

Consignment risk ratings are based on 2 elements:

- 1) The registration status of the offshore entity that supplied the inorganic fertiliser.
- 2) Consignment cleanliness requirements for
 - a) in-ships-hold consignments – the vessel cleanliness and past cargo history
 - b) containerised consignments – the container cleanliness and non-commodity requirements.

Table 1 outlines how we determine risk ratings for consignments or vessel holds of imported inorganic fertiliser. Risk ratings may also be affected where one or more associated importing conditions have not been met.

Table 1 Imported inorganic fertiliser risk ratings, by cargo type

Offshore entity registration	Containerised – cleanliness requirements not met	Containerised – cleanliness requirements met	In-ships-hold – vessel requirements not met	In-ships-hold – vessel requirements met
Registered Level 1	Level 3	Level 1	Level 3*	Level 1 ^a
Registered Level 2	Level 3	Level 2	Level 3	Level 2
Unregistered Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3

a Vessels transporting in-ships-hold product and seeking Level 1 status must not have carried actionable cargo in the previous 6 cargoes.

*If Level 1 product is loaded into a non-Level 1 vessel, it will be treated as Level 3. In such cases, an in-hold and landed inspection will be required at all ports of discharge.

4 In-ships-hold consignments

4.1 Pre-shipment inspection and certification

Prior to export, Level 2 and Level 3 in-ships-hold bagged or bulk (loose) consignments and the vessel they will be shipped in are required to undergo the following procedures:

- marine surveyor's vessel cleanliness inspection
- loading sample inspection
- bagging of a 15-litre loading sample from each consignment hold to be inspected at port of discharge (see [section 4.3.1](#)).

Prior to export, Level 1 in-ships-hold bagged or bulk (loose) consignments and the vessel they will be shipped in are required to undergo the following inspections:

- marine surveyor's vessel cleanliness inspection
- loading sample inspection.

Individual certification must be issued for each inspection type that confirms the department's import conditions and requirements have been met and any issues identified have been addressed.

In-ships-hold consignments seeking a Level 1 or Level 2 assessment are also required to provide the department with a Manufacturer's declaration for in-ships-hold cargo, confirming the biosecurity integrity of the fertiliser (e.g. that it has originated from a registered offshore entity).

Learn more about inspection and documentation requirements for these vessels in [BICON](#).

Download [Chemical and mined fertiliser](#) templates:

- Attachment 3: Marine surveyor's vessel cleanliness inspection guidelines and certificate template
- Attachment 4 Loading sample inspection guidelines and certificate template
- Attachment 5: Manufacturer's declaration for in-ships-hold cargo template.

4.2 Pre-arrival documentation and reporting requirements

All imported consignments of inorganic fertiliser arriving in-ships-hold must be reported to the department no later than 5 business days prior to arrival at the vessel's first port of call in Australia. This includes the provision of all associated information and documentation, known as the 'product profile', which enables the department to complete and issue a 'vessel schedule' to the importer or representative to facilitate the importation process.

Importers or importer's representatives seeking assessment as Level 1 or Level 2 must email the relevant pre-arrival documentation listed in BICON to our Bulk Commodities National Co-ordination Centre (BCNCC) at Fertiliser.Chemical@aff.gov.au.

Importers and representatives who fail to provide a completed 'product profile' within the stipulated timeframe may experience delays in receipt of the 'vessel schedule' and associated biosecurity directions. Consignments of imported in-ships-hold inorganic fertiliser that have not received appropriate biosecurity directions will not be permitted to discharge from the vessel. The department does not accept responsibility for any costs, delays or impositions that arise as a result of an entity not providing us with complete 'product profile' information within the stipulated timeframe.

Failure to provide all required information and documentary evidence for assessment as Level 1 or Level 2 may result in consignments receiving a Level 3 rating and being subject to increased biosecurity intervention.

Learn more about:

- the 'vessel schedule' in [section 4.2.1](#)
- 'product profile' and documentation requirements for consignments of imported inorganic fertiliser arriving in-ships-hold in [BICON](#).

4.2.1 Vessel schedule

Following assessment to determine a consignment's risk rating, the BCNCC will issue a fertiliser 'vessel schedule' to the consignment's importer or representative and to the department's regional inspection teams located at the ports where the fertiliser is to be discharged.

We use the 'vessel schedule' to issue appropriate biosecurity directions relating to the vessel and inorganic fertiliser intended for import into Australia. Vessels and consignments without appropriate biosecurity directions will not be permitted to discharge any goods until we have issued directions.

The consignment's importer or representative must advise the BCNCC team by email of any changes to the 'vessel schedule', including arrival dates, quantities of fertiliser to be discharged and ports of discharge.

Download [Attachment 6: Vessel schedule template](#).

4.2.2 Indirect voyages and/or transporting consignments of mixed goods

The department is aware that some importers of in-ships-hold inorganic fertiliser may use vessels that do not take direct voyages to Australia and/or may share vessels and vessel holds with other importers, including importers of goods that are not inorganic fertilisers.

We consider such situations to be a commercial arrangement and the responsibility of the importers involved. In making such arrangements, importers must ensure they are able to meet all import conditions relating to their goods.

Such arrangements may have a direct or perceived impact upon the biosecurity risk level associated with the goods.

If a biosecurity officer believes that a consignment poses an unacceptable level of biosecurity risk, we may increase our biosecurity intervention for that consignment. This may include inspection, treatment, export or destruction at the importer's expense.

Importers seeking a Level 1 classification of in-ships-hold inorganic fertiliser on board a vessel that has taken an indirect route to Australia, and has not undertaken additional cargo activity after loading, must provide voyage-specific documentary evidence that no further cargo activity has occurred.

If additional cargo activity has occurred between loading and discharge in Australia, the importer or representative of the inorganic fertiliser must provide us with documentary evidence demonstrating that the biosecurity integrity of any holds containing inorganic fertiliser has not been compromised.

We do not accept responsibility for any costs, delays or other impositions that may arise due to exercising our powers under the Act in relation to vessels containing mixed consignments or shared holds.

4.3 On-arrival biosecurity intervention

For on-arrival biosecurity intervention requirements for in-ships-hold consignments, see [BICON](#). This is a summary of the key points of these requirements for each import circumstance.

4.3.1 Consignments: Level 1

In-ships-hold consignments assessed by the department as Level 1, and issued with the appropriate biosecurity directions, may commence discharge on arrival.

Vessels containing Level 1 cargo may undergo a deck and hatch-cover inspection and review of the ship's cargo logs by a biosecurity officer at the first port of call to ensure no actionable cargo has been carried in the previous 6 cargoes.

Alternatively, where the vessel has carried actionable cargo in the last 6 cargoes, a Level 1 classification can also be attained if either:

- the vessel has not carried actionable cargo since achieving the department's Level 1 certification following importation of fertiliser or as part of the Australian cabotage procedure, or
- the vessel obtained a 'Bulk vessel inspection record' issued by the department as a result of a department inspection for prescribed bulk goods exports under the *Export Control Act 2020* since it last carried actionable cargo.

Discharge may occur prior to these activities being undertaken. For discharge requirements, see [BICON](#).

4.3.2 Consignments: Level 2 and Level 3

The importer or representative must ensure that Level 2 and Level 3 imported consignments of in-ships-hold inorganic fertiliser have a 15-litre pre-bagged loading sample from each hold to be discharged. To enable the department to determine freedom from biosecurity risk material, these samples must be set aside on the vessel and be easily available for inspection and sampling. To avoid delays, the 15-litre pre-bagged samples should not be stored in the vessels holds.

The importer or representative must ensure the required 15-litre pre-bagged loading samples are obtained during loading of the fertiliser in the country of export and set aside on the vessel for presentation to the department upon request.

The importer or representative must ensure that the following are made available:

- a representative responsible for lifting or repositioning the bags for inspection by a biosecurity officer, depending on where or how the bags are stowed
- a receptacle large enough to empty the sampled fertiliser into a tub, bin, bucket or bag
- a safe inspection area for the inspection to take place
- if rain or other adverse weather conditions are expected or are present, a sheltered or undercover dry area for the biosecurity officer to undertake inspection and sampling activities.

Learn more about Level 2 or Level 3 consignments with no pre-bagged samples in [section 4.3.3](#).

In-ships-hold consignments that have been assessed by the department as either Level 2 or Level 3 must not commence discharge from the vessel on arrival.

In-ships-hold consignments assessed as either Level 2 or Level 3 are required to undergo a deck and hatch-cover inspection and review of the ship's cargo logs by a biosecurity officer at the first port of call.

Following inspection, and if no biosecurity risk material is identified during the deck and hatch-cover inspection or review of ship's cargo logs, the importer or representative will be directed to present 15-litre pre-bagged loading samples from each hold to be discharged to the biosecurity officer for inspection and sampling. This inspection and sampling activity must be completed at the first port of discharge for each hold.

If a 15-litre pre-bagged loading sample is not available for any hold to be discharged, the associated hold is required to undergo in-hold sampling inspection by a biosecurity officer prior to discharge of that hold (see [section 4.3.3](#)). Provided that the 15-litre pre-bagged sample inspections demonstrate freedom from biosecurity risk material, no further inspections of pre-bagged samples are required at any subsequent discharge ports.

If no biosecurity risk material is identified in any of the 15-litre pre-bagged loading samples, we may direct the fertiliser associated with the relevant holds to be discharged and:

- **Level 2 consignments** – released from biosecurity control
- **Level 3 consignments** – moved to the nominated Class 2.3 Approved Arrangement site to await a landed inspection and sampling by the department.

If biosecurity risk material is identified during the deck and hatch-cover inspection and/or during inspection of the 15-litre pre-bagged loading sample, discharge of goods from any hold of the vessel is not permitted. The biosecurity officers present will contact the BCNCC to determine appropriate action.

When a landed inspection at a Class 2.3 Approved Arrangement site is required, land-bridging of the fertiliser between ports is not permitted.

If biosecurity risk material is identified during the inspection, discharge of all goods from the vessel must cease. The biosecurity officers present will contact the BCNCC to determine appropriate action.

4.3.3 No pre-bagged samples: Level 2 or Level 3

Any in-ships-hold consignments that we assess as Level 2 or Level 3 that do not have 15-litre pre-bagged loading samples available for one or more ship holds to be discharged:

- must not commence discharge from the vessel on arrival
- must undergo a deck and hatch-cover inspection by the department on arrival at the first port of call
- must have the ship's logs or similar reviewed by a biosecurity officer
- must have an in-hold sample inspection undertaken. The samples must be taken by industry under the direct supervision of a biosecurity officer at the first port of discharge for all holds containing inorganic fertiliser that do not have a 15-litre pre-bagged loading sample available for inspection.

Before an in-hold inspection can commence, a 'freedom of hazardous gases' verification must be conducted by a licensed provider, and a 'freedom of hazardous gases' certificate for all holds to be inspected or discharged from must be provided to the biosecurity officers present.

Discharge of goods is not permitted until a biosecurity officer has:

- completed a deck and hatch-cover inspection, verification of ship's cargo logs and in-hold inspection and sampling from each hold to be discharged
- confirmed that no biosecurity risks were identified during inspection and sampling activities
- issued appropriate biosecurity directions advising that the consignments can be discharged from the vessel.

If no biosecurity risk material is identified:

- **Level 2 consignments** – may be released from biosecurity control by a biosecurity officer
- **Level 3 consignments** – may be directed by a biosecurity officer to the nominated Class 2.3 Approved Arrangement site, to await a landed inspection and sampling by the department.

If biosecurity risk material is identified in any hold during the inspection, discharge of the goods from any hold is not permitted. The biosecurity officers present will contact the BCNCC to determine appropriate action.

5 Containerised consignments

5.1 Pre-shipment inspection and certification requirements

Prior to export, containerised bagged or bulk (loose) consignments and the containers they will be shipped in are required to undergo a packing and container cleanliness inspection.

All containerised consignments must undergo a pre-loading sample inspection with the sampling process covering each container in a consignment.

Individual certification must be issued for each container, confirming that they meet the department's requirements and any issues identified have been addressed.

Importers or importer's representative that are seeking a Level 1 classification for containerised consignments must provide a 'Manufacturer's declaration for containerised cargo' to confirm that the biosecurity integrity of the fertiliser and the full supply chain have oversight by a registered offshore entity.

Learn more about:

- the department's non-commodity, container cleanliness and packing requirements in BICON and the [Non-commodity Information Requirements Policy](#)
- inspection and documentary requirements for vessels in [BICON](#).

Download [Chemical and mined fertiliser](#) templates:

- Attachment 4 Loading sample inspection guidelines and certificate template
- Attachment 7: Manufacturer's declaration for containerised cargo template.

5.2 Pre-arrival documentation and reporting requirements

All consignments of imported containerised inorganic fertiliser must undergo documentation assessment by the department. They must also meet import conditions listed in [BICON](#), including additional information and documentary requirements for consignments from registered offshore entities seeking assessment as Level 1.

Failure to provide required information and documentary evidence for assessment as Level 1 or Level 2 will result in consignments receiving a Level 3 classification rating and all associated import conditions will apply.

5.3 On-arrival biosecurity intervention

Learn more about on-arrival biosecurity intervention requirements for containerised consignments in [BICON](#). This section summarises the requirements for each import scenario.

5.3.1 Consignments: Level 1

Consignments assessed by the department as Level 1 that have not been selected for random inspection, and have been issued with the appropriate biosecurity directions, may be released from biosecurity control by a biosecurity officer on arrival.

Importers who confirm or suspect the presence of biosecurity risk material in a consignment that has been released from biosecurity control must immediately report their concerns to the department. Learn more about [reporting a pest or disease of concern](#).

5.3.2 Consignments: Level 2 and Level 3 (and Level 1 consignments randomly selected for inspection)

If these consignments have received appropriate biosecurity directions, they may be moved to the nominated Class 1.1, 1.3, 2.2 or 2.3 Approved Arrangement site to await inspection and sampling activities by the department.

The fertiliser sampling inspection will include inspection and sampling at a rate of 2.25 litres per 33 tonnes from each container to verify that the fertiliser is free from biosecurity risk material. Fertiliser samples will be taken in equal increments from 5 separate points or bags from each container.

If no biosecurity risk material is detected following the inspection, a biosecurity officer may release the consignment from biosecurity control.

If biosecurity risk material is identified, the consignment will not be released. The biosecurity officers present will contact the BCNCC to determine appropriate action.

6 Sanctions

The department may impose sanctions on registered offshore entities that are found to be non-compliant with the conditions of their registration agreement or are responsible, or likely responsible, for non-compliant consignments.

A registered offshore entity may be subject to sanctions when:

- biosecurity risk material is identified in a consignment
- non-compliance is identified during an audit or other compliance management activity and the department loses confidence in the biosecurity management practices of the registered offshore entity
- the entity fails to advise the department of changes to the ownership or operating details of the registered offshore entity that may affect compliance with this policy.

If sanctions are applied, we will take measures to manage the potential biosecurity risk associated with all consignments exported by the registered offshore entity to Australia. Examples of our actions may include:

- increased biosecurity intervention profiling and heightened risk ratings of future consignments of imported inorganic fertiliser exported by the affected registered offshore entity
- where necessary, additional auditing that may take the form of either an independent third-party audit, a virtual departmental audit or an onsite departmental audit.

Sanctions may remain in place until the department's confidence is restored in the entity's biosecurity management practices and commitment to compliance.

6.1 Suspension of entity registration

The department may suspend an offshore entity's registration for failure to comply with the requirements of this policy.

We may suspend the registration of a registered offshore entity when the entity:

- fails to provide records or information to the department in relation to its registration status, including records or information requested relating to investigations that are being undertaken into potential non-compliance
- is unable or unwilling to implement adequate corrective actions to address non-compliance and/or audit outcomes
- fails to comply with the auditing obligations detailed in this policy.

All consignments from suspended offshore entities will be assessed as Level 3.

6.2 Investigation into non-compliance due to biosecurity contamination

Registered offshore entities that wish to retain their registration following a biosecurity contamination incident can submit a non-compliance investigation report for our consideration.

The report must be completed in English and cover:

- verification that the entire supply chain specific to the contaminated consignment, up to the point of vessel departure, was investigated and assessment of the efficacy of each point in the supply chain was conducted
- details of any persons from across the supply chain who were interviewed or questioned as part of the investigation and a summary of their role and input
- details of any existing operating procedures covering the entire relevant supply-chain processes
- details of both staff training records and the individuals delivering the training
- details of proposed or implemented corrective actions to rectify any processes identified as having potentially been the cause of the contamination in the supply chain (including evidence of how these actions will prevent the likelihood of further contamination incidents occurring)
- verify compliance with the requirements of this policy and relevant biosecurity import conditions
- any other requirements deemed necessary by the department to regain confidence in the registered offshore entity's biosecurity risk management practices.

At the department's discretion, the investigation may be conducted by an independent third-party or by the department.

Email completed non-compliance investigation reports and supporting documentation in English to our Sea Cargo Policy section at SeaCargoPolicy@aff.gov.au. We will conduct a desktop assessment to determine the suitability of the offshore registered entity to maintain its registration.

Assessment processing takes up to 6 weeks (30 working days) from receipt of the complete non-compliance investigation report.

6.2.1 Non-compliance investigation: Satisfactory outcome

If we are satisfied with the outcome of a non-compliance investigation report and proposed or implemented corrective actions, we will advise the registered offshore entity of the timeline and requirements for lifting any existing sanctions. This may include further verification activities on consignments exported by the entity to verify the efficacy of any corrective actions implemented.

6.2.2 Non-compliance investigation: Unsatisfactory outcome

If we are unsatisfied with the outcome of a non-compliance investigation report or proposed or implemented corrective actions, we will work with the registered offshore entity to address these shortcomings. We will not lift any sanctions until we are satisfied that the corrective actions have

been implemented and our confidence in the biosecurity risk management practices of the registered offshore entity has been restored.

If adequate corrective actions cannot be implemented and/or our confidence in the biosecurity risk management practices of the registered offshore entity cannot be restored within a reasonable timeframe, we may withdraw the registration of the offshore entity.

6.2.3 Reinstating registration status of suspended or withdrawn entities

Offshore entities that have had their registration suspended or withdrawn can only seek Level 2 registration if:

- any non-compliance related to the previous registration is addressed to our satisfaction
- a full Level 2 registration process is completed (see [chapter 2](#))
- evidence that the entity has been meeting eligibility requirements in the period since its previous registration was withdrawn.

Glossary

For other related terms, see the [approved arrangement glossary](#).

Term	Definition
actionable cargo	Examples of actionable vessel cargo include the following commodities: • grains (e.g. barley, maize, oats, sorghum or wheat) • legumes (e.g. beans, lucerne, peanuts peas or soybean) • nuts • oilseeds (e.g. canola, cottonseed, rapeseed or sunflower) • plant- or animal-based meals and/or stock feed in any form (e.g. canola meal, fishmeal, palm kernel expeller or soybean meal) • rice (raw, unpolished or with husks on), excluding white polished, milled or bagged rice • sand and river sand, excluding mineral sands (e.g. rutile, ilmenite, zircon, garnet and aggregates not containing sand) • sugar cane, excluding raw or processed sugar, bagged or bulk • any other seeds. Logs and timber products are not considered actionable cargo. However, contaminant plant material, including leaves, weed seeds, twigs, woodchips and bark, are an actionable biosecurity risk material.
Audit and Assurance Branch	Branch within the department responsible for conducting and managing audit-related services on behalf of the department.
BICON	The department's Biosecurity Import Conditions system lists importing conditions for all commodities intended to be imported into Australian territory that could pose a biosecurity risk to Australia.
biosecurity officer	A person who is authorised to be a biosecurity officer under section 545 of the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> . Primarily responsible for the inspection of imported goods subject to biosecurity control and treatment, if necessary.
biosecurity risk material	Goods that have the potential to introduce into Australia an exotic pest or disease. This includes goods and packaging that are contaminated, or are contaminated by, material of biosecurity risk. Examples of biosecurity risks include: • dead insects, animals and plants • food refuse • insect and animal products (borer holes, frass or faeces) • live insects, animals and plants • mould • other detritus • plant products (e.g. seeds, bamboo, timber and bark) • soil, dirt, clay and sand • water, including watermarks.
BCNCC	The department's Bulk Commodities National Co-ordination Centre performs assessment and operational management functions relating to vessels and associated consignments of imported bulk in-ships-hold commodities arriving in Australian territory, including inorganic fertiliser.
Cargo Operations Branch – Assessment	Branch within the department that performs documentary assessment services and applies biosecurity directions to consignments of goods that have been referred to our importing systems as a result of biosecurity concerns.
consignment	Any volume of goods (as defined in this policy) to be imported into Australian territory. Consignments can be subject to biosecurity control under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> .

Imported Inorganic Fertiliser Management Policy

Term	Definition
container/containerised	For the purposes of inorganic fertiliser, a container means a sealed, six hard sided shipping container.
entity identifier	The entity identifier (AEI) is a unique number assigned by the department to an entity. The AEI enables us to associate that entity with specific consignments of imported goods via our importing systems. Under the policy, the AEI is issued to registered Level 1 entities.
further processing	Imported inorganic fertiliser that is to be processed at an appropriate approved arrangement site as part of the importation process. The act of processing the fertiliser must be sufficient to reduce the biosecurity risk of the consignment to an acceptably low level. Inorganic fertiliser imported for further processing is managed under a departmental import permit. See BICON for details.
guano	Mineralised rock phosphate of marine bird excrement origin or bat excrement for bat-guano. Non-mineralised guano is not considered inorganic.
independent	In relation to third-party auditing, independent means that the third-party auditor and associated auditing body responsible for conducting an audit of an offshore entity or supply chain is not affiliated or employed by either: - the offshore entity seeking or holding registration under the policy - the importer of the goods in Australia - the department.
Independent authorised inspector	A person who has been assessed by industry to possess the necessary qualifications, skills, experience, registration and resources to conduct goods inspections, and issue required certification. An example of an acceptable international standard is ISO/IEC 17020:2012
inorganic fertiliser	A fertiliser that is either chemical (results from a manufacturing process) or mined (natural, inorganic product mined from the earth). Inorganic fertilisers do not contain ingredients of organic, animal, plant or microbial origin. See chemicals and mined fertiliser .
Level 1	A consignment of inorganic fertiliser that has been assessed by the department as presenting a low level of biosecurity risk to Australia and is subject to a low level of biosecurity intervention on arrival.
Level 2	A consignment of inorganic fertiliser that has been assessed by the department as presenting a medium level of biosecurity risk to Australia and is subject to a medium level of biosecurity intervention on arrival.
Level 3	A consignment of inorganic fertiliser that has been assessed by the department as presenting a high level of biosecurity risk to Australia and is subject to a high level of biosecurity intervention on arrival.
Loading sample inspection guidelines and certificate	After passing inspection and addressing contamination identified during inspection for the entire consignment, the marine surveyor or independent authorised inspector conducting the inspection must issue a certificate attesting to the cleanliness (freedom of biosecurity risk material) of the samples and thus the entire consignment of inorganic fertiliser intended for export to Australia. The loading sample inspection must be conducted or led and certified by a qualified marine surveyor or qualified goods inspector.
manufacturer	An individual or entity that produces, formulates, processes, blends, or otherwise transforms raw or intermediate materials into a finished product, including through chemical, physical, or biological processes.
marine surveyor	A person who has been assessed by industry to possess the necessary qualifications, skills, experience, registration and resources to conduct required vessel inspections or cleanliness and goods inspections, and issue required certification. See Fertilizer Australia's list of qualified marine surveyors .

Imported Inorganic Fertiliser Management Policy

Term	Definition
Marine surveyor's vessel inspection and certificate	A review of a vessel's cargo logs to verify that: - the vessel has not carried actionable cargo within the required timeframe - following an inspection of holds, hatches, decks and ship's equipment, the vessel is free from biosecurity risks. After passing inspection and addressing any contamination identified during the inspection, the marine surveyor is required to issue a certificate attesting to the historical and present cleanliness of the vessel, including holds, that will transport the consignment of inorganic fertiliser to Australia. The marine surveyor's vessel inspection must be conducted or led and certified by a qualified marine surveyor.
oversight (of supply chains)	Oversight by a prospective or existing registered offshore entity of the entire supply chain from the point of manufacture (single supply source) to the point of export to Australia. Offshore entities with oversight of the supply chain must provide documented evidence for each key area (e.g. source and manufacture, handling, transport, storage and loading), demonstrating how biosecurity risk is being managed at these points. Offshore entities are not required to have control or own or operate all key areas of the offshore supply chain – at a minimum, they must have documented or contracted processes in place to manage biosecurity risks.
product profile	The set of documents that the BCNCC requires from importers as part of the pre-arrival assessment process for imported consignments of in-ships-hold inorganic fertiliser.
registered offshore entity (Level 1 and Level 2)	An offshore entity that has applied for and been assessed by the department as having: - satisfied the registration application requirements - acceptable biosecurity risk mitigation measures in place to ensure the biosecurity integrity of inorganic fertiliser consignments exported to Australia from a specific single supply source - committed to ongoing compliance with the registration obligations of this policy.
Sea Cargo Policy team	A section within the department that manages policy associated with imported inorganic fertiliser.
single supply manufacturer	Identified on a per manufacturer basis. A single supply source relates to inorganic fertiliser that has originated from a single manufacturer.
SLA	Under this policy, and in accordance with the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> , the department and the client enter into a service level agreement (SLA), whereby the department provides audit services for assessment of third-party audits and/or virtual audits.
sponsor	An Australian-based and registered company that provides the first point of contact and ongoing liaison point for the department for any matters relating to the registration and compliance of an offshore registered entity.
supply chain	All offshore facilities and entities involved, from the point of manufacture and sourcing the fertiliser to the point of export to Australia. This includes the manufacturing, handling, transport, storage, container inspection and loading facilities, and entities involved in inspection and sampling procedures that are used in the preparation of the fertiliser for export to Australia.
third-party auditor	A qualified third-party auditor who: is independent from the entity or supply chain being audited, the importer and the department holds relevant qualifications and accreditations and is registered with an internationally recognised audit accreditation body. An example of an acceptable international standard is ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.
twenty-foot equivalent unit	A sealed, six hard sided shipping container measuring 20 feet (6.10 metres) in length (external measurement).

Imported Inorganic Fertiliser Management Policy

Term	Definition
unregistered	An offshore entity that has either not been assessed by the department for registration under this policy or has been assessed as not having met the requirements to qualify for registration.

Document control

Version	Date	Reason for change
1.0	2006	Initial version.
1.1	2010	First review.
2.0	2013	Review and inclusion of DAFF offshore audit process.
3.0	2016	Review and inclusion of organisational and legislative changes.
4.0	2017	Update post 2017 review and consultation.
5.0	2019	Update to include outcomes agreed at Industry Logistics Committee, updated contact details and minor formatting edits.
6.0	2023 and 2025	Update post 2023 to 2025 review and consultation.