

NURSERY PAPERS

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NAVIGATING PESTICIDE REGULATION IN HORTICULTURE



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Safeguarding access through industry coordination

INTRODUCTION

Australia's horticulture industry is operating in an increasingly complex regulatory environment. Domestic and international bodies are intensifying scrutiny of pesticide use in response to growing concerns about environmental sustainability, food safety and trade standards.

Many growers have historically taken a reactive approach to pesticide regulation – often discovering limitations only after key products are withdrawn or restricted to pesticide regulation changes – often discovering limitations only after products are withdrawn or restricted. This reactive approach risks disruptions to production and

export markets. To address this, the industry must adopt a coordinated, forward-looking strategy that unites voices across sectors, demystifies complex regulatory processes and anticipates emerging threats.

The *Regulatory Support & Response Coordination project* (MT24008) delivers this critical strategic framework. Building on the success of the earlier MT20007 project, it offers expert-led engagement with regulators and a structured approach to safeguarding pesticide access, ensuring the horticulture sector remains resilient and competitive.



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The project is a three-year initiative led by DTS Regulatory Consultants, designed to act as a regulatory ‘early warning system’ and coordinated response platform for Australia’s horticulture industry.

Its core activities include:

- delivering timely updates on pesticide regulatory developments from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), Codex, and other international bodies
- coordinating industry submissions and responses to regulatory reviews and consultations
- participating directly in regulatory forums and working groups to represent horticulture interests
- conducting detailed risk assessments across multiple crop types to identify at-risk chemicals and inform strategic planning.

Through these actions, MT24008 bridges the gap between regulators and growers, ensuring regulatory outcomes are science-based and aligned with industry needs.

WHY THIS PROJECT MATTERS

Pesticides play a vital role in maintaining crop yields, quality, and sustainability, underpinning the economic viability of Australia’s horticultural exports. However, regulatory changes driven by international trade partners, new scientific assessments, and shifting public expectations can lead to product restrictions or bans, sometimes with little warning.

Without proactive, industry-led responses, Australia risks losing access to key crop protection tools or facing delayed approvals for alternatives.

This jeopardises market access, increases production costs, and threatens the livelihoods of growers and supply chain participants.

This project matters because it:

- provides a coordinated industry voice to inform regulatory decisions and protect pesticide availability

- enables growers to anticipate regulatory changes and adjust practices before disruptions occur
- ensures regulatory processes consider real-world grower experiences and priorities, reducing the risk of unintended consequences.

A common misconception is that pesticide regulation is purely a government responsibility. In truth, active industry participation is crucial to ensure balanced, practical outcomes that support both safety and productivity.

KEY ACTIVITIES

CORE COMPONENTS AGCHEMICAL UPDATES (QUARTERLY)

- Practical summaries of regulatory changes and pesticide developments to keep stakeholders informed of emerging risks and opportunities
- Distributed widely via Hort Innovation and DTS networks for maximum reach

REGULATORY RISK ASSESSMENTS (SIX-MONTHLY)

- Comprehensive evaluations across 57 crop types
- Identifies pesticides at risk of review or restriction
- Guides strategic decisions on chemical access, stewardship, and alternatives

CODEX & REGULATORY PANEL ENGAGEMENT

- Representation at international committees such as Codex CCPR and CCCF
- Ensures Australian horticulture informs development of global pesticide residue standards vital for exports

COORDINATED REGULATORY SUBMISSIONS

- Evidence-based responses to APVMA and international reviews
- Draws on grower input and technical expertise
- Helps prevent or mitigate harmful regulatory decisions before finalisation

COMMUNICATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- Stakeholder engagement plans, newsletters, webinars, and detailed reports
- Builds awareness and readiness to adopt recommended practices industry-wide



IMPLEMENTATION ON SITE

Many growers respond to pesticide regulation changes on an ad-hoc or reactive basis, often after product availability is already affected. The MT24008 project helps facilitate proactive, coordinated action that helps growers stay informed and prepared.

Recommended starting points:

- regularly reading the AgChemical Updates to understand evolving regulatory landscapes
- reviewing risk assessments to assess your reliance on specific chemicals and identify alternative strategies
- participating in consultation opportunities and contributing feedback during submission calls.

Tips for early success:

- nominate a dedicated internal contact to monitor project communications and share relevant information within your business
- discuss potential regulatory impacts during grower meetings, extension activities, or supply chain reviews
- collaborate with agronomists and chemical suppliers to develop contingency plans based on projected changes.

DIGITAL TOOLS OR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Several digital platforms enhance the uptake and effectiveness of the MT24008 project outputs:

- **DTs LinkedIn alerts:** real-time notifications about pesticide developments and regulatory actions, helping stakeholders respond quickly
- **Hort Innovation delivery partner portal:** centralised access to updates, submissions, reports, and supporting resources
- **APVMA news publications & chemical review websites:** official sources for tracking regulatory proposals and decisions.

These tools enable better decision-making, improved compliance readiness, and streamlined communication across the horticulture value chain.

BENEFITS

Before

- Growers were often unaware of regulatory risks until chemicals were banned or restricted
- Disjointed efforts made it hard to respond

After

- Timely updates flag upcoming issues early
- Industry submissions influence regulatory decisions before they're final
- Strategic planning helps avoid loss of key products
- Communication between growers, consultants, and regulators is aligned

Strategic advantages:

- Stronger market access
- Greater input into pesticide reviews

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

The MT24008 project is not just about reacting to regulation – it's helping shape the future. New innovations are being explored to strengthen Australia's ability to stay ahead of the curve and maintain access to essential pest management tools.

Here's what's emerging

• RISK PREDICTION MODELLING

This uses data to forecast which pesticides are most likely to be reviewed, restricted or removed – before it happens.

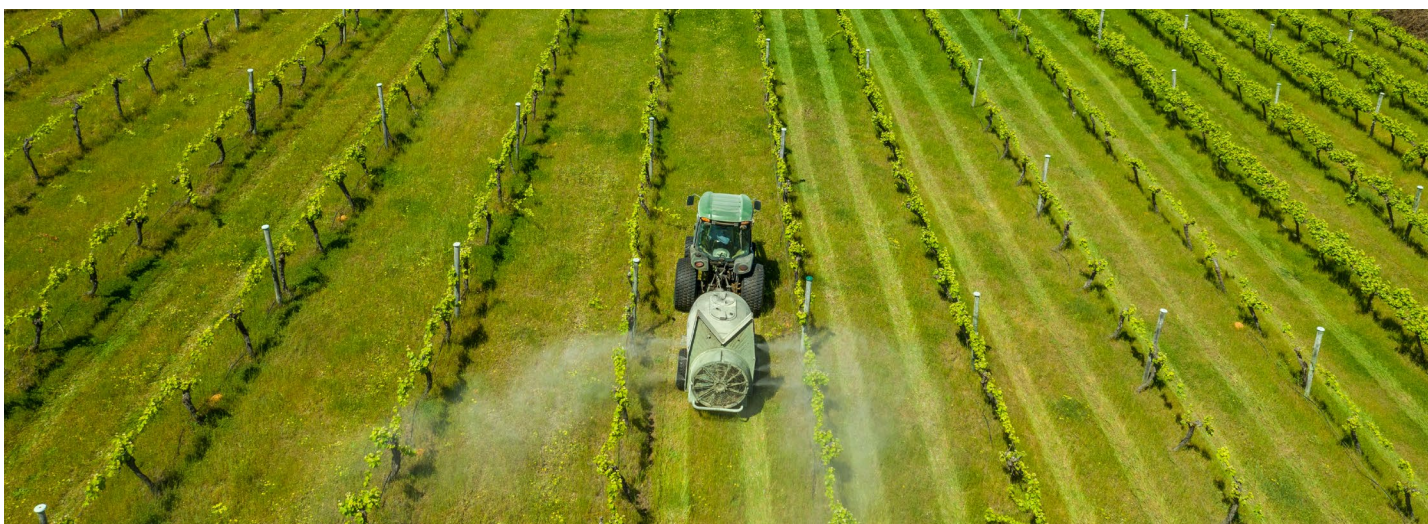
Growers can plan ahead, avoid relying on products that may be phased out, and talk to suppliers or agronomists about alternatives early.

• NEXT-GEN PEST CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES

The project is monitoring new options like biological pesticides and gene-targeted products (e.g. RNAi) that could replace traditional chemicals in the future.

These innovations could give growers more sustainable, targeted ways to manage pests – with less residue and lower resistance risk.

By identifying and evaluating these innovations early, the project ensures that Australia's growers stay informed and competitive — and that future regulations are shaped with real-world needs in mind.



GETTING STARTED

To begin leveraging the benefits of MT24008:

- 1 NOMINATE** an industry liaison within your business to coordinate communications and engagement
- 2 SUBSCRIBE** to Hort Innovation's AgChemical Update mailing list
- 3 REVIEW** the latest Risk Assessment relevant to your crops
- 4 DISCUSS** upcoming pesticide reviews and potential impacts with your chemical suppliers and agronomists.

These simple steps lay the groundwork for a proactive, informed approach to pesticide regulation.

FURTHER SUPPORT

CONTACT:

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RESOURCES:

- *MT24008 Project Page (Hort Innovation)*
- *Previous Project MT20007 Summary*
- Past nursery papers – www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/communications-centre