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Greenlife Industry Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

Another biosecurity hit for tomatoes

Tomato potato psyllid detected in Victoria: biosecurity alert for Australia's horticulture industry

Growers in Victoria are being urged to keep an eye out for tomato potato psyllid (TPP; *Bactericera cockerelli*) following recent detection of the pest insect in the southwest of the state.

The detection of the psyllid in a protected tomato cropping facility marks the first case outside Western Australia, where it was initially detected in 2017. Surveillance in the vicinity has identified further cases within 1.5 km of the facility, significantly extending TPP's known range in Australia.

Agriculture Victoria is working with the business and stakeholders to ensure the pest is managed effectively. There have been no detections in any other traps in place across the state, so far.

John McDonald, Director of Research, Development, Extension (RDE) and Biosecurity at Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) emphasised the urgent need for the industry to respond.

"Detecting TPP in Victoria is a wake-up call for the horticulture industry – it's critical that growers and stakeholders proactively manage this pest and limit its spread," Mr McDonald said.

Testing has found no sign of *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* (CLso)—the bacteria that causes Zebra chip in potatoes and spread by the psyllid – noting TPP can still harm crops by damaging plants as it feeds. "For growers of nursery stock, the stakes are particularly high. Rigorous hygiene, monitoring and sourcing protocols are essential to safeguard the supply of healthy, pest-free plants, which are critical to supporting the broader horticulture industry," he added.

TPP is a sap-sucking insect that targets solanaceous (nightshade) plants, including tomatoes, potatoes, capsicums and eggplants. While the pest itself causes minor crop damage, its ability to transmit CLso – a pathogen not currently in Australia – poses a significant threat to plant health and market access.

Grower action needed

Production nurseries and growers play a pivotal role in limiting the spread of TPP through strong on-farm biosecurity practices. These measures protect both individual businesses and the integrity of Australia's horticulture supply chain.

GIA recommends that production nurseries adopt robust plant protection measures, including:

- **enhanced hygiene protocols** – clean tools, machinery and surfaces regularly; consider using footbaths and restricting access to high-risk areas
- **frequent monitoring** – inspect plants for signs of TPP, including yellowing or wilting leaves and the presence of tiny psyllids
- **safe sourcing** – purchase seeds and plants only from certified suppliers and inspect deliveries on arrival
- **integrated pest management** – work with experts to develop strategies for pre-harvest chemical control and natural predator management.

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“Growers of nursery stock are on the front line of biosecurity, and by implementing these measures, they can safeguard their businesses, customers and the wider industry,” Mr McDonald said.

TPP is an exotic pest under Victoria’s *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010*. If you suspect TPP in your nursery or on your property, report it promptly to Agriculture Victoria by email at plant.protection@agriculture.vic.gov.au or online at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/reportpestsonline

Mr McDonald stressed that coordinated efforts from government, industry and growers will be critical to containing the pest and slowing its spread.

“The detection in Victoria highlights the need for ongoing vigilance and collaboration. Strong biosecurity measures across the nursery and horticulture sectors will be critical to containing the pest and protecting the resilience of Australian agriculture,” he said.

For more information about TPP and biosecurity measures, visit Agriculture Victoria’s website at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/tpp or the Pest Identification Tool at pestid.com.au

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