

**Australian  
Seed Federation**



**2026-27  
Pre-Budget  
Submission**

# INTRODUCTION



The Australian Seed Federation is the peak industry body for the Australian seed industry at the local, state, national and international level. The members of the Australian Seed Federation are at the foundation of Australia's \$99.5 billion agriculture industry. Our membership covers the full seed supply chain and includes plant breeders, seed growers, seed processors and seed marketers. We exist to ensure a seed industry that is productive and sustainable.

The Australian Seed Industry is worth over \$1.3 billion annually to the Australian economy and is an important part of rural and regional Australia.

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## A stronger seed industry for a stronger Australia

The Australian Seed Federation (ASF) calls on the Australian Government to back the seed industry as a driver of innovation, productivity, and sustainability. With the agriculture sector targeting \$100 billion in farmgate value by 2030, and many other industries reliant on seed and seed products, a strong, competitive seed industry is critical.

We urge the Government to act on the following priorities:

### Protect plant breeding and innovation

- **Enforce Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR)** – Fund IP Australia to expedite the PBR review and introduce an Information Notice System to crack down on non-compliance and ensure Australia continues to be a home of plant breeding innovation.
- **Ensure fair End Point Royalty (EPR) collection** – Strengthen systems to support growers to pay royalties, protecting breeding investment and innovation.

### Fix biosecurity and border delays

- **Faster clearance times** – Cap seed import delays at three days by funding better-trained biosecurity officers and streamlined processes.
- **End inefficiencies** – Eliminate outdated systems that cause unnecessary costs and delays for Australian agribusiness.
- **Develop national standards** – Establish a nationally consistent, federally led framework for the interstate movement of seed that harmonises phytosanitary requirements across jurisdictions to reduce domestic trade barriers and improve efficiency.

### Modernise phytosanitary regulations

- **Support Australia's testing system** – Align phytosanitary testing with global standards to avoid trade barriers.
- **Support a 'Systems Approach for seed'** – Fund DAFF to participate in a pilot certification-based system that facilitates seed trade without excessive red tape.

### Enable gene technology and new breeding techniques

- **Implement long-overdue reforms** – Fast-track regulatory updates from the Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme

### Solve workforce shortages

- **Fund an Agricultural Workforce Campaign** – Attract and retain skilled workers in the seed industry, ensuring Australia's agricultural future.

### Invest in sustainability and carbon trials

- **Support carbon sequestration trials for turfgrass** – Unlock turf's potential as a major carbon sink with targeted research funding.



## Establish a National Native Seed Framework

- **Set clear, consistent standards** – Develop a nationally consistent framework for native seed collection, and quality assurance.
- **Support supply chain development** – Invest in native seed production to meet growing demand for restoration, carbon projects, and biodiversity initiatives.

## Strengthen Australia's pasture seed industry with reliable data

- **Close the information gap** – Establish a national system to track pasture seed production, ensuring accurate industry data.
- **Support smarter decision-making** – Give industry and government the insights needed to plan for growth, investment, and global competitiveness.

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## Protect plant breeding and innovation

There continue to be growing concerns around the security of Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR) and the ability of the R&D and breeding sector to secure income through End Point Royalty (EPR) payments.

A decline in EPR compliance, driven by uncertainties surrounding PBR enforcement, is reducing income streams and impacting the viability of plant breeding businesses. This has flow-on effects for the broader industry, with reduced investment in breeding likely to undermine the future productivity of Australian agriculture.

ASF is calling for the current review of the PBR framework, being undertaken by IP Australia, to be appropriately funded and expedited. The lack of progress and absence of clear timeframes has created uncertainty across Australia's broadacre crop breeding sector, as well as the wider grains, pasture and grass seed industries.

In the absence of a stronger legal foundation to support compliance, companies will be forced to make commercial decisions to reduce investment in regions with low EPR compliance and instead redirect resources to areas where returns are more secure. This risks diminishing productivity in parts of the country at a time when agriculture is already under pressure from increasing biosecurity threats and the seasonal impacts of climate change.

The current review of the PBR Act presents an opportunity to address these issues. ASF has submitted recommendations to IP Australia and will not reproduce them in detail here. However, key areas requiring clarification or amendment include:

1. Clarifying the definition of Propagating material to include harvested material from field crops
2. Harmonising Australia's definition of essentially derived with UPOV guidance
3. Including a purchase right under Section 11 of the Act
4. Introducing a notice system to support compliance

These improvements, implemented in a timely manner, would help ensure Australia's plant breeding sector remains strong, commercially viable and focused on delivering innovation.

### The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund IP Australia to:

- **Enforce Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR)** – IP Australia must expedite the PBR review and introduce an Information Notice System to crack down on non-compliance and ensure Australia continues to be a home of plant breeding innovation.
- **Ensure fair End Point Royalty (EPR) collection** – Strengthen systems to support growers to pay royalties, protecting breeding investment and innovation.

## Fix biosecurity and border delays

Delays in seed import clearance, exacerbated by ongoing workforce shortages, are placing unsustainable pressure on the system.

These delays affect the entire supply chain by increasing freight costs and disrupting growers' tightly scheduled planting windows. Given its sensitivity to time and storage conditions, seed should be treated as a perishable commodity.



A key challenge is the shortage of trained biosecurity officers available to conduct seed assessments, which in some cases is causing delays of several weeks. The Australian Seed Federation is working with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to help address this gap by supporting training initiatives. However, additional funding is required to expand and accelerate the program.

It is also essential that biosecurity inspection charges reflect officer expertise. Less experienced officers typically require more time, increasing overall costs for industry. Previously, companies could book inspections at a cost-effective day rate, but this option is no longer available.

Re-introducing a primary production levy is not a viable solution. The seed industry already makes a significant financial contribution to biosecurity and should not be burdened with further levies.

In addition to international trade challenges, inconsistent phytosanitary requirements between states, particularly for seed movement into Western Australia and Tasmania, create unnecessary domestic barriers. Establishing a national framework for phytosanitary standards would streamline interstate trade, reduce duplication, and provide greater certainty for industry.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government provide DAFF with funding to:**

- **Faster clearance times** – Cap seed import delays at three days by funding better-trained biosecurity officers and streamlined processes.
- **End inefficiencies** – Eliminate outdated systems that cause unnecessary costs and delays for Australian agribusiness.
- **Develop national standards** – Establish a nationally consistent, federally led framework for the interstate movement of seed that harmonises phytosanitary requirements across jurisdictions to reduce domestic trade barriers and improve efficiency.

## Modernise phytosanitary regulations

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has introduced mandatory destructive phytosanitary testing protocols not applied in other jurisdictions. These requirements are causing delays and discouraging the import of high-value germplasm for plant breeding, ultimately limiting Australia's global competitiveness as an agricultural exporter and creating inefficiencies for departmental staff.

Additional funding is required to complete long-overdue Pest Risk Analyses, with appropriate industry consultation, to provide certainty for seed importers.

The movement of seed is critical to global food security, plant breeding, and trade. However, Australia's consignment-by-consignment phytosanitary certification process is becoming increasingly restrictive. The complexity and specificity of import requirements also make re-export difficult.

The Australian Seed Federation supports the implementation of a Systems Approach for seed, a certified supply chain model built around industry pest management practices, to streamline both import and export processes. Initial discussions with the Department on this approach have been constructive.

ASF urges the Australian Government to provide active support to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in its development of a Systems Approach Annex to ISPM 38 and to contribute funding toward this work.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund DAFF to:**

- **Support Australia's testing system** – Align phytosanitary testing with global standards to avoid trade barriers.
- **Support a 'Systems Approach for seed'** – Fund DAFF to participate in a pilot certification-based system that facilitates seed trade without excessive red tape.



## Enable gene technology and new breeding techniques

In 2018, the Gene Technology Ministers' Meeting (GTMM) endorsed the Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme, aimed at modernising regulatory settings across agriculture, health, and medicine. Despite multiple consultation rounds and consistent calls from industry for updated definitions, risk-proportionate regulation, and streamlined processes, progress has remained slow.

In September 2024, the Department of Health released the Exposure Draft of the Gene Technology Amendment Bill 2024 for public consultation, which closed on 8 November 2024.

Yet another stage of consultations for legislative reform opened in January 2026.

The Australian Government must allocate funding to the Department of Health to ensure the implementation of these long-overdue reforms is prioritised.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund the Department of Health / OGTR to:**

- **Implement long-overdue reforms** – Fast-track regulatory updates from the Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme.

## Solve workforce shortages

The Australian seed industry is fundamental to the production of food, feedstock, and textile fibre. Like many agricultural sectors, it is facing critical workforce shortages that threaten future growth and productivity.

To help address this, the Australian Seed Federation has invested in the Seed Industry Professional Program, providing targeted education and training for both new entrants and existing professionals.

Government programs such as AgCAREERSTART, which supports young Australians entering agriculture, and the AgConnections – Skilled Agricultural Work Liaison pilot, which partners with universities to promote agricultural careers, are important steps in the right direction. The AgUP grants program also plays a valuable role in supporting industry-led initiatives focused on workforce attraction, training, and career development.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund DAFF to:**

- **Fund an Agricultural Workforce Campaign** – Attract and retain skilled workers in the seed industry, ensuring Australia's agricultural future.

## Invest in sustainability and carbon trials

Turf is a significant carbon sequester, with the potential to become one of Australia's largest carbon-storing crops, given the extensive coverage of golf courses, sports fields, parks, schools, and home gardens.

ASF's turf seed members are seeking investment in field trials to quantify the carbon sequestration potential of turfgrass varieties suited to Australian conditions. These trials would assess the balance between maintenance intensity, soil carbon storage, and overall turf performance.

Since 1997, the Australian National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (ANTEP) has provided independent varietal testing, reducing Australia's historical reliance on U.S. data. Future trials are intended to examine turf's environmental role beyond traditional performance attributes.



A modest investment in an ANTEP trial focused on carbon sequestration would generate valuable environmental and economic insights, particularly given research showing that turf can store 80–90% of carbon in home settings. The resulting data would support turf managers in making informed, sustainable choices around turf selection and management.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund ANTEP trials:**

- **Support carbon sequestration trials for turfgrass** – Unlock turf’s potential as a major carbon sink with targeted research funding.

## Establish a National Native Seed Framework

Native seed plays a vital role in ecological restoration, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation. However, the sector continues to face challenges, including inconsistent standards, variable seed quality, and supply shortages, that limit its ability to meet growing demand.

To address these issues, a National Native Seed Framework is needed to establish clear and consistent standards regarding native seed collection, handling, and quality assurance to improve the reliability and success of restoration efforts. Investment in native seed production to increase capacity and ensure a secure, scalable supply for environmental restoration, carbon projects, and biodiversity initiatives is also needed.

A well-designed framework will provide greater certainty for land managers, environmental groups, and industry, while supporting long-term ecological and commercial sustainability.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund the Australian Seed Federation to:**

- **Set clear, consistent standards** – Develop a nationally consistent framework for native seed collection, and quality assurance.
- **Support supply chain development** – Invest in native seed production to meet growing demand for restoration, carbon projects, and biodiversity initiatives.

## Strengthen Australia’s pasture seed industry with reliable data

Australia’s pasture seed industry lacks reliable data on domestic production, leaving it well behind other agricultural sectors in understanding market size, trends, and value. This data gap limits informed decision-making by both industry and government and constrains opportunities for investment, growth, and strategic planning.

Historically, seed certification agencies provided consistent production data. However, as the market has shifted toward proprietary varieties and certification rates have declined, much of the sector now operates without a clear system for tracking production volumes. Without a national reporting mechanism, the full economic and agricultural contribution of the industry remains under-recognised.

To address this, a national system for tracking pasture seed production is needed. A practical and low-burden solution would involve voluntary reporting by seed processing facilities, which handle the vast majority of pasture seed prior to sale.

The Australian Seed Federation would be well placed to manage data collection and reporting in partnership with Agricultures through the pasture seed advisory panel.

**The ASF recommends the Australian Government fund AgriFutures to:**

- **Close the information gap** – Establish a national system to track pasture seed production, ensuring accurate industry data.
- **Support smarter decision-making** – Give industry and government the insights needed to plan for growth, investment, and global competitiveness.