

Improved plant pest database to protect agriculture

An important tool for protecting Australia's precious natural environment and agricultural industries has been updated and improved.

A CSIRO team at the Tasmanian ICT Centre has recently completed a comprehensive upgrade of the Australian Plant Pest Database (APPD), a national online database of pests and diseases of Australia's economically important plants.

Dr Ian Naumann of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry says that the APPD is a powerful tool for decision making.

"The APPD provides information on the existence and geographic location of plant pests and diseases and provides a capability vital to the national economy," Ian says.

"It provides critical support to decision making during emergency management of incursions by exotic species and is a powerful tool for evaluating proposals for new imports and supporting measures to exclude potentially harmful organisms."

The initial phase of the project, completed in April 2002, allowed searching across a number of reference collections that include pest and disease records held by a large number of organisations across the country.

Previously, only a relatively small number of these collections had transferred information into databases that were accessible to agencies and organisations involved in plant health. The linking

of these to create a larger, internet-based, national database was therefore a major step forward, achieved through a partnership of CSIRO and Plant Health Australia.

"Part of the current upgrade has been to convert the current distributed APPD system into a central data warehouse with automated refresh of the information from source databases," says Michael Kennett of the Tasmanian ICT Centre. "The upgrade has also made the APPD more efficient, secure and powerful, and improved its ease of use."

Available nationally

The new system has now been deployed nationally after comprehensive testing. The project builds on a data management capability being developed within the Tasmanian ICT Centre. The administration and hosting of the APPD is performed by Plant Health Australia as part of the Company's 'National system of plant health information' program.

The Tasmanian ICT Centre is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Intelligent Island Program and CSIRO. The Intelligent Island Program is administered by the Tasmanian Department of Economic Development.

A large number of partner organisations including universities, state and federal government departments and CSIRO contribute to the APPD.

Australian Plant Pest Database:

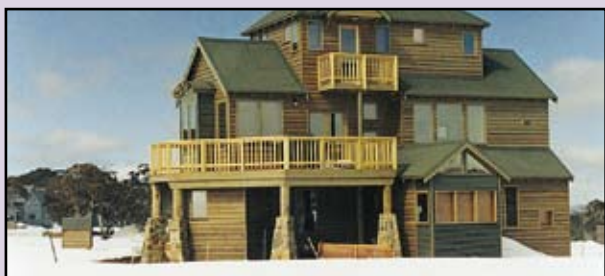
www.planthealthaustralia.com.au and follow the links.

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Pests of grain crops such as the Balaustium mite – *Balaustium medicagoense* – can be monitored on the APPD.