

## Tiny wasp to combat stink bug



Horticultural industry groups along with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) are working together to use a tiny parasitoid wasp to combat the Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB).

The BMSB Council (a partnership between horticultural industry groups and MPI, under GIA) has made an application to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) seeking approval to release the Samurai wasp (*Trissolcus japonicus*) as a biocontrol agent against BMSB, but only if an incursion is found in New Zealand.

BMSB Council Chair Alan Pollard says if a BMSB incursion is found here, the consequences would be disastrous for New Zealand's horticulture industries and everyday New Zealanders.

“The stink bug is one of the biggest biosecurity threats we face, and it could cause hundreds of millions of dollars of losses. The wasp provides an opportunity to be proactive in our approach and gives us another tool we can use to control the stink bug,” said Mr Pollard.

“It feeds on over 300 plant species and can multiply and get to very high population numbers rapidly, destroying crops and gardens and even get into your home. In the USA and Europe where the invasive pest has become established, it has caused severe damage to the horticulture industries. It’s also invaded residents’ homes and become a real social nuisance.”

“We’ve also seen growers overseas use high levels of insecticides as the primary way to control the stink bug. We believe the wasp will provide a targeted and self-sustaining control tool and provides growers with another option other than increasing insecticide sprays,” says Mr Pollard.

The wasp does not sting and is harmless to humans but is a natural enemy of the stink bug. The female wasp lays her eggs inside the stink bugs eggs, killing the stink bug in the process. Studies overseas have shown the wasp can destroy over 70 percent of the eggs in a stink bug egg mass.

A NZIER report, commissioned by the Samurai Wasp Steering Group, has estimated that gross domestic product would fall by between \$1.8 billion and \$3.6b by 2038 if BMSB became established. It also estimated the horticulture export value could fall by between \$2b and \$4.2b.

Public submissions are now open until 5pm, Thursday, 24 May 2018. Interested parties are encouraged to [make a submission on the EPA website](#).

ENDS

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**About the BMSB Council**

The BMSB Council is a partnership under GIA between industry and government and is responsible for BMSB readiness and response. The Council consists of member organisations (Kiwifruit Vine Health, Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand Avocado, New Zealand Apples & Pears, New Zealand Winegrowers, Tomatoes New Zealand, Vegetables New Zealand) and observers (Foundation for Arable Research, Horticulture New Zealand, New Zealand Plant Producers Inc., Process Vegetables New Zealand and Summerfruit New Zealand).

**About the Government Industry Agreement (GIA)**

GIA operates as a partnership between industry groups and Government to manage pests and diseases that could badly damage New Zealand's primary industries, our economy, and our environment. It aims to improve biosecurity outcomes and give everyone the confidence that the best decisions are being made to manage and mitigate biosecurity risks. New Zealand Winegrowers signed the Government Industry Agreement Deed for biosecurity readiness and response in May 2017. For more information, visit [www.gia.org.nz](http://www.gia.org.nz).