

RISK BACKGROUND

Fresh coconut and coconut meat

Overview



(Image: Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, *Immature coconut*)

Fresh coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) and coconut meat does not require an import permit but must be:

- free from excess stalk, trash, shoots and sprouts
- subject to pre-export inspection by the exporting country
- accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate
- packaged in secure packaging (i.e. insect-proof)
- inspected on-arrival.

Whole coconuts imported with husk (excluding prayer nuts) are subject to additional treatment requirements. For more information on types of coconut material, please see the [coconut identification guide](#).

Importers and department staff should ensure that the BICON conditions are met and that goods are free from biosecurity risks, as well as the key risks described below.

Key risks for fresh, whole coconuts

Arthropod pests

Coconuts can carry a range of contaminating pests which could be present on the outer surface of the nut, including:

- Insects that can vector plant pathogens such as the *Coconut foliar decay virus*. This virus can be carried by plant hoppers including *Myndus taffini*, and causes lethal disease of coconut palm.
- The coconut bug, *Amblypelta cocophaga* which presents an unacceptable biosecurity risk due to its potential to have devastating impact on a wide range of hosts including eucalypts, palms and a range of fruit crops. The coconut bug injects toxic saliva into plants causing black, necrotic regions and promotion early fruit drop.

The risks posed by arthropod pests can be reduced by husking to remove the outer fibrous layers of the coconut prior to importation. Coconuts with husks intact pose a heightened risk of arthropod pests being present in the consignment and therefore requires fumigation treatment. A small cone of husk covering one end of the coconut (such as with prayer nuts) is acceptable provided no pests are present.

Pathogens

Mature coconuts may introduce seed-transmitted diseases such as Cadang-cadang. This disease is caused by the coconut cadang-cadang viroid and is characterised by reduced nut production and plant death. For this reason, Australia's import conditions require consignments to be free from sprouted material. Husking or importation of immature coconuts may also reduce the likelihood of germination and the risk of seed-transmitted diseases being introduced.

Other pathway risks

Imports of fresh coconut and coconut meat may contain biosecurity risk material such as live insects, diseased symptoms, and contaminants such as soil, weed seeds, hitchhiker pests and trash. These risks are managed through a range of import conditions as outlined above.

Key risks for processed coconut products

The biosecurity risks posed by processed coconut products are lower than that of fresh, whole coconuts. Processed coconuts are unlikely to have insect infestation and cannot be propagated, so there is little disease risk on this pathway.