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New Zealand takes action in response to Australia's tomato virus find

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Biosecurity New Zealand has placed import restrictions on tomato seed imports from Australia, after the detection of tomato brown rugose fruit virus at 2 South Australian growing properties.

"Weâ??ve stepped up our biosecurity requirements in response to the recent finds in South Australia," says Stuart Anderson, Biosecurity New Zealand deputy director general.

"Imported seeds for sowing from Australia will now require testing for the virus before arrival in New Zealand, which is a requirement that is already in place for other countries where the virus is present.

"We have also temporarily suspended tomato imports from all Australian states except Queensland, where there is no evidence of the disease or links to the affected properties in South Australia."

Stuart Anderson says all our imported tomatoes from Australia currently come from Queensland and not South Australia.

"Weâ??re in close contact with our counterparts in Australia about what theyâ??ve found and the measures they are taking, and weâ??ll continue to monitor the situation closely.

"Weâ??re committed to ensuring New Zealand growers are protected, and thatâ??s why weâ??ve taken these steps already."

Stuart Anderson says the virus, which was first noted in the Middle East, has never been found in New Zealand, and affects tomatoes, capsicums, and chillies, causing yellowing and deformity in the host plants, but has no impact on human health.