



Phytos work update – May 2026

Welcome to the latest Phytos update.

Recent Board Activity

The Phytos Board met earlier this month to review 2026/27 R&D priorities and progress across key projects. Discussions covered governance, market access pathways, Research & Development (R&D) trials, debarking quality assurance and potential phytosanitary responses to recent windthrow events.

Phosphine R&D Update

Phytos and Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI) formerly Scion have completed a detailed science review on phosphine efficacy for log exports. Two papers were developed:

- **Paper 1:** Phosphine efficacy (gas and tablets) based on studies by Esfandi, Jamieson, and others.
- **Paper 2:** Factors affecting treatment, drawing on Wadell, Devitt and additional literature.

These papers strengthen the scientific case for the current phosphine treatment pathway. The Board is now considering a forward-looking phosphine research plan to build further knowledge and in doing so evaluate research prioritisation, operational feasibility, capability and cost. This work further supports the successful implementation of a single-dose phosphine treatment for logs in ship holds to China.

India – Systems Approach Update

Good progress continues on the “safe pathways – systems approach” for log exports to India. In conjunction with Phytos, MPI has developed an enhanced proposal to share with Indian officials. The proposal aims to advance dialogue toward a trial shipment of logs (initially in containers). If approved, this would provide a valuable contingency pathway alongside the existing treatment-on-arrival option.

Debarking – Quality Assurance Project Update

Phytos has recently provided MPI with initial feedback on a draft Official Assurance Programme (OAP) for debarking. MPI is now preparing the OAP for formal consultation with the wider sector. Phytos is open to coordinating member feedback into a single consolidated response, as it has done successfully in the past.

Operationally, the next steps for Phytos and its members include:

- Traceability testing (lot number → debarker → Phytos certification).
- Ongoing quality system audits (next round likely Q4 2026).
- Continued monthly performance monitoring. While overall bark percentages are generally below 2%, some operators are still seeing the occasional rough log that requires further attention.

The Phytos-funded debarking quality assurance scheme strengthens New Zealand’s response to Chinese General Administration of Customs (GACC) concerns and supports reliable phytosanitary certification.

Phlebiopsis Dispensation Request – Nelson Tasman Windthrow Logs

Storm damage in the Nelson Tasman region has resulted in visible *Phlebiopsis* spp. on salvaged Radiata pine logs, triggering rejections at port under MPI's Logs OAP.

In collaboration with MPI, FPEC, FOA, regional forest owners and exporters, a formal, targeted dispensation application has been prepared for MPI approval. The proposal seeks a time-bound variation to allow:

- Export of salvage-grade logs containing *Phlebiopsis* (segregated at source, no tolerance limit).
- Limited tolerances in non-salvage rows at port ($\leq \frac{1}{4}$ cut-face diameter per log with no rot; $\leq 5\%$ of logs per row).

The proposal is strictly limited to defined events, locations, timeframes and is supported by enhanced management plans, traceability and verification. *Phlebiopsis* is not a regulated pest by importing countries, and salvage grading provides an established mechanism for handling out-of-spec material. Phytos supports this dispensation, which would reduce operational disruption while maintaining phytosanitary standards.

Other Updates

- Phytos is represented on a new cross-sector "special interest group" promoting forestry exports to India.
- Phytos is represented on a sector-wide Oversight Committee relating to the development of a NZ Pine brand.
- The Phytos Board is currently reviewing the organisation's Constitution. Any substantive changes will be presented for approval at the 2026 AGM.
- Log exporters are encouraged to separate phytosanitary certification by top stow, in hold, and treatment type to improve traceability.
- Phytos has recently submitted on MPI's proposed increases to phytosanitary certification costs.
- Phytos has recently submitted on IRD's consultation document relating to Taxation and the Not-for-Profit Sector (ie, Incorporated Societies).
- In February Phytos supported an inbound Indian delegation and took the opportunity to promote the systems approach.
- Phytos has engaged with Forest Growers Research (FGR) and the Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI) on projects examining the effect of chemical e-thinning on pest populations and the use of log tags in the forest.

Farewell to Don Hammond, Independent Chair

Don Hammond has indicated that he will step down at the end of this financial year (30 June 2026). Phytos sincerely thanks Don, who has served as Independent Chair since the organisation's inception — first with STIMBR in 2008 and then through the transition to Phytos in 2022/2023.

Don has provided steady, wise, and collaborative leadership over many years. His strategic guidance has been instrumental in establishing Phytos as the respected go-to entity for phytosanitary treatments and market access issues in the log export sector. Under his chairmanship, Phytos has



strengthened its governance, financial position, research programme, and industry partnerships while successfully navigating a challenging export environment.

We are grateful for Don's significant contributions and wish him all the best for the future. He will remain available to offer support as needed during the transition and into the foreseeable future.

Following Don's decision to step down, the Board is seeking a new Independent Chair. The Key attributes sought include;

- Proven governance experience at Board or Chair level, ideally within the forestry industry.
- Strong strategic insight, financial acumen, and the ability to lead discussions while managing diverse stakeholder views.
- Demonstrated leadership and communication skills with a collaborative, consultative style.
- Not a current member of Phytos.
- Understanding of the forestry/log export sector would be highly advantageous.

This is an excellent opportunity to contribute to a strategically important industry funded body focused on the future of New Zealand log exports. For further information or to apply, please contact Matt Hill at matt@phytos.co.nz.

Phytos continues to advocate strongly for the sector. If you have any issues or suggestions, please contact Executive Officer **Matt Hill** at matt@phytos.co.nz.