



Grains Industry Bulletin - Exports

Providing assurance to Australia's trading partners that the residue status of grain meets international and market specifications is essential to continued market access for Australian grain exports. Diligence is therefore required by exporters of containerised and bulk grain to ensure chemical residues are below national and internationally approved residue limits and the grain is free of other contaminants such as coloured grain due to fungicidal treatment.

The NRS, an operational unit of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry, has conducted a Grains (Export) Program for several decades. The Program, which is industry funded through 0.015% 'farm-gate-value' levies on each grain commodity involved, monitors for residues of pesticides, veterinary medicines and environmental contaminants in Australian grain commodities. Approximately 3,500 bulk and container export grain samples are collected and analysed each year.

The principal objective of the NRS Export Grain Program, and its associated residue testing results, is to facilitate and maintain export market access for the wider grain industry. For this reason, results are provided to the grain handler and marketer within 4 working days of sample receipt at the analytical laboratory. This ensures that the residue status is known prior to the export grain arriving at its destination.

Concerns

Low level residues of chemicals commonly used in Australia for the control of insect pests in stored grain have been detected by the NRS export grain monitoring program in grain destined to markets sensitive to chemical residues. The residues found have been well below the Australian MRLs. However, markets including Taiwan, Korea, China and the EU have very low MRLs or no MRL set for some of these chemicals and therefore any residue detection is a contravention of their national standards.

Exporters should also be aware of the potential trade implications if grain treated with a fungicide for the purpose of protecting seed for sowing is found in export consignments of grain. This has been a recent issue where officials at an export destination found coloured/stained grain due to fungicidal treatment admixed in a containerised consignment of wheat. Grain with residues of these fungicidal treatments is unfit for sale for either stockfeed or human consumption.

These issues have the potential to result in trade disruption for the Australian grains industry valued at \$7.0bn per annum. The risk of market disruption increases with each incident and history shows that trading partners may place restrictions on all Australian grain exports, rather than targeting individual exporters. In the case of shipment rejection, excessive costs to the exporter due to the redirection of grain consignments or the downgrading of quality/price are likely.

What you can do?

Know the chemical residue status of the grain before loading and exporting. There is a range of information available to assist this process.

Ensure that a NRS sample is collected during loading of bulk shipments and containers. If you are not currently participating in the NRS Grains Program, please contact NRS on +61 2 6272 5790 to arrange supply of sampling equipment, sample forms and sampling guidelines. Participation comes at no additional cost to the handler or marketer.

For the benefit of the Australian grains industry and exporters alike, NRS maintains a database of international MRLs applying to grain commodities. Exporters wishing to familiarise themselves with individual country's residue limits by commodity are encouraged to visit the NRS website at www.daff.gov.au/nrs. Access to the international MRL database is password protected, enter your details where requested on the website or contact the NRS on +61 2 6272 5790 for logon details.

In addition, all exports should ensure they have adequate procedures in place to ensure all parties involved in the export process of their parcel of grain are aware of the residue limits applying to the country of destination. Consideration should be given to the use of quality assurance programs, involving declarations of chemical use, sampling and testing other than through the NRS program.

To assist industry, the document 'Australian Grains Industry Post Harvest Chemical Usage Recommendations and Outturn Tolerances 2008/09' was prepared by the grain industry and the NRS. It details post-harvest chemicals used in Australia and industry recommendations of residue limits applying for international markets. It is available for exporters and all industry sectors and can be found on the Grain Trade Australia (GTA) website at www.graintrade.org.au.