16 May 2019

GrainGrowers statement around grains import announcement

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has issued a permit for a single shipment of bulk wheat from the Canadian west coast. The cargo will be discharged in New South Wales and transferred to the Manildra Group's Shoalhaven plant. We are aware that there several additional import permit applications currently being assessed by the Department.

We have spoken with the Department who confirmed the import permit was issued on 14 May 2019. It was not possible to advise our growers any earlier than this date about the import activity because the permit had not been released.

The Australian grains industry understands the importance of trade. Indeed, Australian grain farmers generate around $12 billion annually in export earnings for the national economy. GrainGrowers does not oppose the importation of grains or processed grain products if biosecurity is not compromised. Whole and processed grains imports pose a high biosecurity risk as these can be a direct pathway for the introduction and spread of exotic pests and diseases that can harm humans, animals, crops and the environment.

Australia's grain import permit and protocol system is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure that any grain imports do not compromise Australia's biosecurity and therefore profitability of Australian agriculture.

The importation of grain reflects tight supplies owing to the devasting 2018 east coast drought. There is discussion within the grain industry regarding whether Australia's grain supply (inventory) is currently adequate to meet domestic demand requirements. Unfortunately, there is a lack of required information available to the market or government to allow for an accurate, reliable or informed decision. As a result, GrainGrowers continues to call for the introduction of national grain stocks reporting as a key priority issue for the sector.

Grain Growers Limited