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24th May 2024

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Email: Via Web

Re: Submission: Cost Recovery Implementation Statement: Plant Export Certification

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the call for submissions on the Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS) for the grain industry in relation to grain export regulatory activities charged by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Grain Trade Australia (GTA) is a member of the DAFF Grain and Plant Products Export Industry Consultative Committee (GPPEICC). GTA is a national association and the focal point for the commercial grains industry within Australia. The role of GTA is to provide a **framework** across Industry to facilitate and promote the trade of grain. GTA facilitates trade and works to provide an efficient, equitable and open trading environment by providing leadership, advocacy, and commercial support services to the Australian grain value chain.

GTA Members are drawn from all sectors of the grain value chain from production to domestic end users and exporters. GTA has over 285 organisations as Members. Their businesses range from regional family businesses to large national and international trading/storage and handling companies who are involved in grain trading activities, grain storage, processing grain for human consumption and stock feed milling. A list of GTA Members is attached.

As the exporters of grain from Australia, it is GTA members who pay for the grain export cost recovery (ECR) program.

1. Value of Australian Export Regulations

The Australian grain industry has a reputation as a reliable supplier of quality grain on the international market. This reputation is supported and enhanced by the export regulations managed by DAFF to ensure grain meets importing country quarantine requirements. GTA and its members fully support those regulations and work collegiately with DAFF to achieve our joint objectives.

2. Government Direction & DAFF Performance against its Strategy

2.1 Financial Performance / Service

The Department's financial difficulties during 2023 were well publicised leading to reported:

- restrictions on non-essential travel and training;
- re-prioritising non-critical projects; and
- a reduction in contracted workforce numbers.

During 2023 GTA and its members were aware of restrictions applied to grain industry projects (for example the ePhyto and Grain Storage Assets and Management Standard projects) and DAFF staff because of the reported financial difficulties. This was concerning given the grain industry has seen some of the best seasons of production and consequently exports in recent years. As a result of these seasons, the grain export cost recovery (ECR) program has exceeded budget over the last three seasons and the Department have reported a Cost Recovery Reserve balance of \$3,591,128 at the commencement of the 2024-25 budget period.

GTA notes at the last GPPEICC finance meeting the 2023-24 grain surplus is likely to be \$2m as compared to the CRIS Table 5 that indicates a Balance (X-Y) of \$150k. GTA estimated this takes the grain ECR reserve to a balance of \$5.4m at the commencement of the 2024-25 budget period.

It is critically important to consider the **effectiveness and the application** of the DAFF cost recovery model and the impact it has on the agricultural industry's efficiency. The grain industry operates under a globally competitive market and for Australian participants to be successful an efficient, low cost and competitive operating environment is required including the provision of government services.

The Productivity Commission Guidelines on Cost Recovery by Government Agencies describes the key principle of government *cost recovery mechanisms* as:

"Cost recovery should be implemented for **economic efficiency reasons**, not merely to raise revenue".

In 2019 a review by the Australian Audit Office (AAO) of how DAFF applies the Governments Cost Recovery Principles noted and recommended -

The Department:

- uses the current review of its charging arrangements to align its fees and levies with the Cost Recovery Guidelines; and
- develops a cost recovery model that aligns the prices, expenses and revenues of outputs within regulatory activities to the efficient cost of providing those outputs.

It is noted whilst DAFF agreed to this Recommendation there has been little to no change since this AAO Review.

The grain industry position is the cost recovery mechanism must adhere to Government policy objectives, including the key principle of transparency and the provision of cost-effective services. Restriction of services to a sector operating during an intense export period with excess Export Cost Recovery (ECR) funds would not appear to be adhering to Government policy objectives.

The grain industry has accepted regulatory charges on the basis that DAFF (i.e. Government) should be accountable to industry for the efficient use of these funds and the funds should only be utilised for the purpose on which they are collected or for the benefit of the group (i.e. grain exporters) from which they were charged and collected. Given the other agricultural sectors Reserve Balances being substantially negative and the reported parlous state of DAFF's finances the grain industry is concerned its funds were not efficiently utilised, and potentially subsidised other sectors, for example a disproportionate allocation of costs (such as occurred with the allocation of Ag Counsellor costs at the end of the FY2023-24 year).

We remain frustrated around the seemingly slow process and progress on some key technical market access issues, including new market access. For the size of the grain export program and the amount of cost recovery fees paid by grain exporters, we remain concerned that the allocation of resources such as technical experts to progress grain related technical market access issues is disproportionate to the fees paid. This is evident in the persistent and ongoing request by DAFF for industry to "prioritise" market access issues, to the point that only 1 or 2 issues seem to be worked on by DAFF at any one time. While we recognise other factors including other country's engagement, impact this, we would encourage more transparency, including across commodities, in this process to improve confidence and demonstrate value and equity of expended cost recovered funds.

2.2 Effective Cost Accounting & Management

Whilst GTA supports cost recovery as a mechanism to provide key services not covered through Government consolidated revenue, this is based on being provided with access to information and discussion with DAFF that provides satisfaction the cost is balanced by the provision of an effective and efficient service.

The Grain and Plant Products Export Industry Consultative Committee (GPPEICC) is the principal forum for DAFF to consult with the grain, fodder, nuts, seed and timber industries on export inspection and certification, export market access and other relevant issues.

A focus for the GPPEICC is to review **DAFF performance against budget**. This has been hampered in recent times due to an inability to provide accounts data as a result of numerous issues including complexity due to the 'machinations of Government'. This was concerning to the members of GPPEICC and raises further concern to the ECR model and its effectiveness. Further, if DAFF could

not report basic financial data to GPPEICC, we question how DAFF managers could effectively manage their own resources and budgets if they had no visibility of financial data.

In recent meetings GPPEICC members have noted improvement in the financial reporting of DAFF and its timeliness, however the poor previous financial reporting, necessitates a need for ongoing vigilance from GPPEICC members.

2.3 Digital Reforms and Transformative Projects

Government through its recent *Congestion Busting* investment dedicated \$222.2m to upgrade the Information Technology that underpins the government export system. This was seen as a much-needed investment to streamline and simplify DAFF processes and export services and to transform it into a modern and efficient partner for industry.

However, these projects and system upgrades do not appear to have delivered the anticipated stepchange for the grain sector with grain still utilising *exdoc* whilst other sectors have transferred to *nexdoc*. The operation of multi-system platforms operated by DAFF must increase its cost of service and may hamper the efficiency of service to industry.

Industry also continues to face delays in the progress towards electronic phytosanitary certificates through the International Plant Protection Convention hub. This continues to remain a concern and focus for GTA members.

GTA welcomes and supports transformative projects that align industry and Government strategy and note the following joint projects that are underway:

- 1. The Grain Storage Assets and Management Standard
- 2. The Grain Assessment Technology Standard

These projects can transform Government and industry and provide benefits and a deeper understanding of each sectors objectives and issues. The joint approach to these and other projects will release value and assist in the longer term towards the goal of DAFF being the modern and efficient partner for industry that we all desire.

3. Review by the Department – Sustainable Export Funding Model

Government has allocated \$3.7m over three years to enable the development of an ongoing sustainable export funding model to ensure DAFF remains appropriately resourced to carry out its agricultural trade and export functions into the future.

This review is welcomed on the basis it focusses on *economic efficiency* rather than solely a focus on *increasing* revenue to plug the reported financial shortfalls of the Department.

We note the Grain CRIS states the 2021-22 cost as the base for the CRIS is no longer valid and extensive work is required to reset these figures. GTA questions this statement given a significant portion of DAFF regulatory activity costs are employee related. There has been minimal change to DAFF staff associated with services to the grain industry.

Whilst GTA supports cost recovery as a mechanism to provide key services not covered through Government consolidated revenue, this is based on being provided with access to information and engagement with DAFF that provides satisfaction the **cost is balanced** by the provision of an effective and efficient service. This is a difficult proposition as how does industry determine the value proposition of the DAFF fees given there is no market that operates for government services?

GTA has previously suggested a method to consider may include comparative benchmarking within DAFF and its service to each agricultural sector and also against other government departments. The 2019 AAO audit also proposed DAFF and other agencies **benchmark their costs and attempt to relate them to the market**. This would create greater transparency of the overall costs borne by the grain industry.

Greater transparency afforded through a **strategic benchmarking approach** should provide longterm benefits to industry and DAFF, resulting in potential cost savings to industry and a reduction in the overall budget of the Plant Export Operations branch responsible for provision of the regulatory function. These should be considered as a component of the review of a sustainable export funding model.

4. In Summery

- GTA considers it is critically important to consider the effectiveness and the application of the DAFF cost recovery model and the impact it has on the agricultural industry's efficiency.
- GTA supports cost recovery as a mechanism to provide key services not covered through Government consolidated revenue, this is based on being provided with access to information and engagement with DAFF that provides satisfaction the cost is balanced by the provision of an effective and efficient service.
- Understanding the value proposition of the DAFF fees and services is important to GTA and it is proposed DAFF as part of the sustainable export funding model consider processes to monitor and measure DAFF's services remain efficient and cost effective.

GTA consider such proposals to be aligned with the Government's strategy to grow agriculture industry value to \$100 billion by 2030.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Please do not hesitate to contact GTA at any stage to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

Pat O'Shannassy

Posh

CEO, Grain Trade Australia



Membership List as of 03 April 2024

Member Type ↑ Ordinary Member	Member Level ↑ A1	Account Name CBH Group GrainCorp Australia	Primary Contact Ben Macnamara	Website www.cbh.com.au
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			Robert Spurway	www.graincorp.com.au
		Viterra Australia	Philip Hughes	www.viterra.com.au
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	A3	Cargill Australia	Zsolt Kocza	www.cargill.com.au
		1		
	A4	ADM Trading Australia	Darryl Borlase	www.adm.com
		Arrow Commodities	Dominic Vanzella	www.arrowcom.com.au
		Australian Grain Export	Tim Martin	www.australiangrainexport.com.au
		Bunge Agribusiness Australia Pty Ltd	Stephen Bennett	www.bunge.com
		Louis Dreyfus Company Emerald Australia	Oliver Reid	www.ldc.com
		5		
	B1	CHS Broadbent	Steve Broadbent	www.broadbentgrain.com.au
		ETG Commodities	Peter McMeekin	www.etgworld.com
		George Weston Foods	Michael Schmidt	www.gwf.com.au
		Manildra Group	Peter Sloan	www.manildra.com.au
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		Riordan Grain Services		www.nordangrains.com.au
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		Inghams Enterprise Pty Ltd	Matt Clarke	www.inghams.com.au
		J K International Pty Ltd	Sandeep Mohan	www.jki.com.au
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		Riverina (Australia) Pty Ltd	Gareth Stapleton	www.riverina.com.au
		Wilmar Gavilon Pty Ltd	Matt Albion	www.wilmargavilon.com
		6		
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		Boolah Farms Pty Ltd	Stuart Tighe	www.boolah.com.au
		Brahman Commodities	Michael Aikman	www.bookin.com.au
		Cofco International Australia		www.cofcointernational.com
			Sarah Pan	
		Demeter Grains	David Oates	www.demetergrains.com.au
		K M & W M Kelly & Sons	Matt Kelly	www.kellygrains.com.au
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		Robinson Grain Trading	Adam Robinson	www.robinsongrain.com.au
		8		
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		Associated Grain t/a Agrocorp Processing Australia	Russell Darbey	www.agrocorp.com.au
		Australian Food & Fibre Processing	Peter Webb	www.australianfoodandfibre.com.au
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			Shane Bird	www.bfb.com.au
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		Blairs Produce Company	Sean Blair	crt.com.au/store/blairs-produce-company/
		Castlegate James Australasia Pty Ltd	Ross Giovanetti	www.castlegatejames.com.au
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		MSM Milling Pty Ltd	Peter MacSmith	www.msmmilling.com.au
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		Quattro Ports	Dave Allen	www.quattroports.com.au
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	Rex James Stockfeed	Natasha Davies	www.jamesstockfeed.com.au
	Rivalea (Australia) Pty Ltd - Animal Nutrition	Andrew Philpotts	www.rivalea.com.au
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	TSS Grain (Tasmanian Stockfeed Services)	Trevor Macleod	www.tasstockfeed.com.au
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	·		
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C2	Access Grain Pty Ltd	Wade Humphries	www.accessgrain.com.au
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	Australian Growers Direct Pty Ltd	Tyrone Stowers	www.ausgrowersdirect.com.au
	Australian Mungbean Company Pty Ltd	Damien White	www.australianmungbean.com.au
	A W Vater & Co	Kim Vater	www.vater.com.au
	Baker Grain	Richard Baker	www.bakergrain.com.au
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	Direct Commodities Pty Ltd	Hamish Robertson	www.directcommodities.com.au
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	Laragon Almond Processors Pty Ltd	Mark Webber	www.laragon.com.au
	Mandala Trading	Jayjeev Saraff	www.mandalatrading.com.au
	Marina Commodities (Australia)	Palwinder Singh	www.marinacommodities.com
	Matthews Transport and Grain Traders	Neville Matthews	linkedin.com/in/neville-matthews-aa592191
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		PB Seeds	Peter Blair	www.pbseeds.com.au
		Pearson's Grain	Darren Pearson	www.pearsonsgroup.com.au
		Peters Commodities	Michael Oxley	www.petcom.com.au
		Pinnacle Grains Pty Ltd	Sonal Vij	www.pinnaclegrains.com.au
		Plum Grove	Rikki Foss	www.plumgrove.com.au
		Pure Foods Eggs Pty Ltd	Tim Castle	www.purefoods.com.au
		QS Commodities Pty Ltd	Nick Slipper	www.qscommodities.com
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		RP Grain Pty Ltd	Gordon Pulham	randpcarriers.com.au/r-p-grains
		·		www.rurallogic.com.au
		Rural Logic (Aust) Pty Ltd	Michael Wood	
		Shannon Bros Bulk Storage Pty Ltd	Clayton Shannon	www.shannonbros.com.au
		Silo Bag Grain (NSW QLD) Pty Ltd	Lesley Kilby	www.silobaggrain.com.au
		Societa Cofica Pty Ltd	Dia Ram Sharma	www.societacofica.com.au
		Southern Grain Pty Itd	Tim Gross	www.southernstockfeeds.com.au
		Southern Grain Storage Pty Ltd	Campbell Brumby	www.southerngrains.com.au
		Spagricon Australia	Jiger Kotecha	www.spagricon.com.au
		Standard Commodities Australia Pty Ltd	Elizabeth Bozinoska	www.stancom.com.au
		Sudima Australia		www.stancom.com
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		Sun Euro Australia	Tarun Saxena	www.suneuro.com.au
		Tamma Grains Australia Pty Ltd	Kim Packer	www.tammagrains.com.au
		Tiller Commodities Pty Ltd	Brett Cooper	www.tillercommodities.com
		TRC International	Yohan Goonetilleke	www.trcglobal.com.my
		Trentham Grazing Pty Ltd (t/a Godde's Grain & Fertiliser Pty Ltd)	Kim McGaw	www.goddesgrainandfertiliser.com.au
		Ulusoy Asia Pacific Pty Ltd	Mark Madjarevic	www.ulusoyflour.com
		Universal Commodity Management	Tim Dean	www.commoditymanagement.com.au
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		ZTC Australia	Timothy Byass	www.ztcaus.com
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nonart Operator				www.crawfordsfreightlines.com.au
ansport Operator		Crawfords Freightlines Pty Ltd	Phillip Davis	
		Gehrke Grains & Transport Pty Ltd	Julian Gehrke	www.gehrke.com.au
		Hamilton Contracting (NSW) Pty Ltd	Jodie Hamilton	www.hamiltoncontracting.com.au
		Horne Ag Logisitics Pty Ltd	Jeremy Horne	www.horneaglogistics.com.au
		Pacific National (NSW) Pty Ltd	Nick Ryder	www.pacificnational.com.au
		SEAWAY Intermodal Pty Ltd	Bikash Ram	www.seawayintermodal.com.au
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		Horizon Grain Brokers Pty Ltd	Ash Munro	
		·		www.horizongb.com.au
		Pure Grain Network Pty Ltd	Stuart Tighe	www.puregrain.com.au
		Quest Commodities Pty Ltd	Jayne Barker	www.questcommodities.com.au
		Rain Agribusiness	Ian Grellman	www.rainag.com.au
		StoneX Financial Pty Ltd	Stefan Meyer	www.intlfcstone.com
		Teague Australia Pty Ltd	Tim Teague	www.teague.com.au
		J ,	8	
	Sole Operator	A C Grain	Adam Clarke	www.acgrain.com
	Joie Operator			
		Allied Grain Pty Ltd	Angus Wettenhall	www.alliedgrain.com.au
		Cogeser (Australia) Pty Ltd	Robert Luetolf	www.cogeser.com.au
		Farm Tender	Matt Henke	www.farmtender.com.au
		Lotema Pty Ltd	Todd Lees	www.lotema.com.au
		Mallon Commodity Brokering	Ian Mallon	www.mcbrokering.com
		McDonald Pelz Australia	Stuart Richardson	www.mcdonaldpelz.com
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		Woodside Commodities Pty Ltd	Hamish Steele-Park	www.woodcomm.com.au
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		Barrett Burston Malting Co.	Dean Ganino	www.bbmalt.com.au
		BoortMalt Asia Pacific Pty Ltd	Simon Robertson	www.boortmalt.com
		Commodity Inspection Services (Australia) Pty Ltd	Katrina Saunderson	www.commodityinspection.com.au
		Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Samuel Chambers	www.commbank.com.au
		NSW Ports	Campbell Mason	www.nswports.com.au
		Sanitarium Health Food Company	Nathan Bullock	www.sanitarium.com.au
		Symbio Laboratories	Kristian Just	www.symbiolabs.com.au
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	Medium	AgriDigital	Emma Williams	www.agridigital.io
		AgriFood Technology	Doreen Fernandez	www.agrifood.com.au
		AgriFood Technology Amspec Australia	Lee Shilvock	www.agrifood.com.au www.amspecgroup.com.au
		Australian Superintendence Company (ASC)	Andrew Parry	www.austsupco.com.au

		Clear Grain Exchange	Nathan Cattle	www.cleargrain.com.au
		Foss Pacific	Steven Ilgoutz	www.foss.com.au
		HFW Australia	Stephen Thompson	www.hfw.com
		Holding Redlich	Geoff Farnsworth	www.holdingredlich.com
				www.intertek.com
		Intertek Association Association (Association Association Associa	Debbrah Millard	
		Mars Petcare Australia (t/a Mars Birdcare)	Kurt Sosinski	www.mars.com.au
		Oldendorff Carriers Melbourne	Allen Dewhirst	<u>www.oldendorff.com</u>
		PSC Griffith Goodall Insurance Brokers	Mandy Gladman	www.pscggib.com.au
		Qube Logistics (SB) Pty Ltd (T/A Qube Agri)	Jeremy Brown	www.gube.com.au
		SBA Law	Jeremy Rosenthal	www.sbalaw.com
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		SGS Australia	Trent Charlton-Maughan	www.au.sgs.com
		T-Ports	Nathan Kent	www.tports.com
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	Small	Advance Trading Australasia	Andrew Woodhouse	www.advance-trading.com.au
		Ag Scientia	Lloyd George	www.agscientia.com.au
		AgVise (WA) Pty Ltd	Shane Sander	www.agvise.com.au
		Aperture Ag Pty Ltd	Alex Campbell	www.apertureag.com.au
		Basis Commodities	Chris Whitwell	www.basiscommodities.com
		BSM Global	Jason Flemming	www.buysellmove.com
		Cloudbreak Grain Marketing	Ed Scamps	www.cloudbreak.com.au
		Delta Agribusiness	Michael Parry	www.deltaag.com.au
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		E P Integrated Commodities Pty Ltd	Tracey Lehmann	<u>epicbrokers.biz</u>
		Farmanco Marketing Pty Ltd	Donald McTaggart	www.farmanco.com.au
		FARMARCO Australia Pty Ltd	Rob Imray	www.farmarco.com.au
		Finesse Solutions	Malcolm Finlayson	malcolm@finessesolutions.com.au
		Flexi Grain Pty Ltd	Jarrod Tonkin	www.flexigrain.com.au
		Futari Grain Technology Services	Leah Petrie	www.futari.com.au
		Goldstar Commodities	Geoff Webb	www.goldstarcommodities.com.au
		Graintec Scientific	Lucas Anstiss	www.graintec.com.au
		Grainx	Judi Morgan	www.grainx.com.au
			Richard Perkins	https://linkedin.com/in/richard-perkins-39090a3b/
		Greenoaks Agriculture Pty Ltd		
		Harvestcheck Pty Ltd	Stephen Schumacher	www.harvestcheck.com.au
		Hay Plains Grain Storage Pty Ltd	Ron Harris	www.fellowsbulk.com.au/grainstorage
		IKON Commodities	Ole Houe	www.ikoncommodities.com.au
		Indyn	Rob Martin	www.indyn.net
		·		
		Lachstock Consulting	Nick Carracher	www.lachstockconsulting.com.au
		Longbridge Commodities	Kareen Durr	www.longbridge.com
		MarketAg Pty Ltd	Mark Martin	www.marketag.com.au
		McMullen Consulting	Gerard McMullen	www.mcmullengrainagricultural.com
		Mercari Pty Ltd	Daniel Marsh	www.mercari.com.au
				www.mirfak.com.au
		Mirfak P/L	Mark Murphy	
		National Grower Register	Debbie Newmarch	www.ngr.com.au
		OMIC Australia Pty Ltd	Koji Nakashima	www.omicaustralia.com.au
		Perten Instruments	Raul Ovelar	www.perten.com
		Pinion Advisory	Chris Heinjus	www.pinionadvisory.com
			•	www.planfarm.com.au
		Planfarm Marketing Pty Ltd	Jerome Critch	
		Praig Marketing Pty Limited	Kevin Schwager	www.priag.com.au
		Primal Foods Group	Peter Longhurst	www.primalfoodsgroup.com
		Profarmer and Australian Crop Forecasters	James Maxwell	www.nzx.com
		Rise Agribusiness	Ian Dalgliesh	www.riseagri.com.au
		Saputo Dairy Australia	Ashley Denishensky	www.saputo.com
		SGA Solutions Pty Ltd	David Hudson	linkedin.com/in/david-hudson-8240b913
		Sizer & Cogill (t/a NQ Bulk)	Chris Sizer	www.sizercogill.com.au
		Ten Tigers	Chris Tonkin	www.tentigers.com.au
		TE Storage & Logistics Pty Ltd	Tom Hage	www.testorage.com.au
		TT Club Mutual Insurance	Rhys Richards	www.ttclub.com
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		Ultimate Global Trading Pty Ltd	Andrew Alexopoulos	www.ultimategt.com.au
		Wattletree Consulting	Joe Righetti	<u>www.wattletree.net.au</u>
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International Affiliate		CIS Commodity Inspection Services	Paul Schweitzer	www.cis-inspections.com
		Grains Middle East Trading DWC-LLC	Mark Stapleton	www.grains-middleeast.com
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In decade a Account of				
Industry Association		AEGIC	Courtney Draper	www.aegic.org.au
		Grain Growers Limited (GGL)	Shona Gawel	www.graingrowers.com.au
		Grain Industry Association of WA (GIWA)	Peter Nash	www.giwa.org.au
		Grain Producers Australia Ltd (GPA)	Colin Bettles	www.grainproducers.com.au
		NSW Farmers Association	Elen Welch	www.nswfarmers.org.au
		Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia (SFMCA)	Duncan Rowland	www.sfmca.com.au
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		Grain Industry Association of SA	Marie Cunningham	www.giasa.org.au
ivierchant Association		Grain Industry Association of VIC (GIAV)	Colin Peace	www.giav.com.au
Merchant Association		Grain madatry Association of Vic (GIAV)	Contri Cacc	www.giav.com.au
Merchant Association		Crain NEW	Joanno Maro	ununu grainneuu eem au
Merchant Association		Grain NSW	Joanne Ware	www.grainnsw.com.au
Merchant Association		Grain NSW Queensland Agricultural Merchants (QAM) 4	Rob Imray	www.grainnsw.com.au www.qam.org.au