



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEETING MARKET REQUIREMENTS

The Australian grain industry came together for **the 51st Australian Grain Storage & Protection Conference on the 5th and the 6th of June 2024**. Delegates were treated to a professional and information packed 2 days supporting the work and objectives of the National Working Party on Grain Protection (NWPGP).

Conference Chair Gerard McMullen commented “this the 51st Australian Grain Storage and Protection Conference is an important occasion and event in the calendar of the grain industry and supports the important role of science combined with stewardship within the supply chain to enhance the reputation of the Australian grain industry as a provider of a quality and safe product.”

Grain Trade Australia’s (GTA) Deputy Chair, Ms Michelle Kerr, opened the Conference welcoming delegates and noted that in 2024 the astute consumer is indeed asking, where, what and how has the food on my plate got here.

Ms Kerr emphasised the industry and supply chain are under increased scrutiny; food safety and sustainability are now increasingly under the spotlight. Michelle emphasised the importance of protecting our great industry and reputation. “As a self-regulated industry, it is up to everyone to be accountable for its reputation and to mitigate risk to our markets and customers.

The world is watching what we do and what safeguards are in place, which is why events like today are so important” Ms Kerr said.

The industry experts

Over 40 speakers and industry experts provided information to 180 delegates on a range of research findings, communication and extension activities conducted and supported by various industry and government organisations such as the Australian Pesticides & Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), Grains Research and Development Corporation’s (GRDC) Grain Storage Extension Team and state Government agencies.

The Insights

- There was great discussion and debate on the role of the Australian and global governments in regulating and harmonising across countries the use of agricultural chemicals. Delegates heard from numerous speakers of the process, the complexities and the Government support and tools available to deliver the appropriate outcome across all industries.
- National research is continuing on the resistance of the five major stored product pests to the fumigant phosphine. This is important research as delegates heard the Rusty Grain Beetle in Australia continues to develop resistance to phosphine. This research aids informed decisions **on alternative treatments and changes to fumigation practices** that support the increased efficacy of existing treatments.
- Temperature and the moisture content of grain in storage has been a major focus as a tool for grain quality maintenance and the prevention / reduction of insect pests. Grain cooling by pushing air through stored grain is increasingly seen as an important tool. It also leads to a measured improvement on quality attributes including germination vigour and retention of colour in pulses.
- Industry and the Government are progressing the development of voluntary Standards applicable to all grain storage facilities and operators to facilitate innovation and to support the reputation of the Australian grain supply chain in international markets.
- Continuing challenges remain in storing grain insect free, meaning hygiene and monitoring practices are critical to ensure the safe storage and integrity of grain. This means the quality of storages and their capability to provide a suitable gas tight environment for fumigation purposes is critical.
- Effective fumigation as well as being critical to prevent insect resistance importantly also supports market access and retention of our valued markets. Australia's fumigation practices can be improved in some areas.
- As reported by the National Residue Survey industry compliance with meeting market MRLs for a range of chemicals remains extremely high.
- There is increased global scrutiny of supply chains and high standards are expected and proof is required through audit processes and record keeping. These requirements will continue to evolve and change due to market preferences. Having an integrated pest management system in commercial and farm storage is critical to the success in managing pests whilst ensuring the grain remains accepted in the market and by the final consumer.
- Live polling of delegates was used to capture the mood on many key points with strong support for continued and additional funding in grain storage extension.

A clear message was that as market expectations increase and become more demanding there is a requirement for both industry and government to consider how to ensure supply chain participants are capable and adequately trained in the necessary steps to be compliant. Extension services, information and training and having Standards to apply were considered critical tools the industry and its supply chain can aspire to. It was reinforced that further opportunities exist to work with the sector to develop specific extension material addressing issues such as grain hygiene practices, the correct application of fumigants and the impact poor practices can have on market access.

The feedback

Delegates travelled and tuned in from across the country to benefit from the insights and discussion during the panel sessions.

Ms Jo Grainger, Assistant Secretary, International Strategy and Engagement Branch, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry commented “it’s great to attend the NWPGP as it delivers both government and the grain industry a forum to hear and to discuss information that is critical to the sustainability of the grain supply chain. The world is becoming more concerned about food security whilst demanding greater knowledge and certification of grain quality and any chemical residues. Conferences like the Grain Storage Conference provide leadership and stewardship to industry through access to presentations and discussion that were extremely knowledgeable and topical to current issues as well as providing the right balance between ‘the science’ and the realities of the market”.

Ms Kerr said “GTA has a long association and history with the NWPGP conference and is proud to be involved as conference organiser. This conference is of immense value to the current and future reputation of Australia’s grain supply chain and helps to cement and promote effective quality assurance throughout the grain supply chain. As industry has established a self-regulatory framework to self-manage and provide leadership in quality assurance of grain this Conference and its participants are integral to achieving and maintaining Australia’s well-deserved reputation.”

The NWPGP is funded by Grains Australia Limited.

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