



2023 AUSTRALIAN GRAIN STORAGE & PROTECTION CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

This File Note lists outcomes agreed by the 2023 Australian Grain Storage & Protection Conference (Conference), hosted by the National Working Party on Grain Protection (NWPGP) in Melbourne on 7-8 June 2023. Agreed outcomes, major discussion points and findings are listed numerically in no order of priority.

There were over 155 attendees at the Conference, both present in the conference room and on-line, representing all sectors of the grain supply chain.

To provide comment on this document or to comment on any NWPGP related matter, please contact the Chair NWPGP, Gerard McMullen via email at gerard@mcmullengrainagricultural.com.

A. Headlines

- This was the 50th conference of the NWPGP, a celebration for industry of the role the NWPGP has played over that time.
- The Conference continues to be well attended and cover a range of issues of direct interest to industry.
- Market access compliance with chemical Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) continues to remain high.
- Ongoing advocacy is needed to assist industry to understand the implications of chemical use on market access and to ensure all regulations are met when using chemicals.
- Industry continues to implement effective management systems when using chemicals and to ensure resulting residues meet market requirements.

B. Official Welcome

The Chair of Grain Trade Australia (GTA), Andrew Goyder, opened the Conference. GTA provided a commitment to continue to support the ongoing activities of the NWPGP, including:

- Administration of the NWPGP and organising the annual Conference which continues to be strongly attended by representatives of all sectors of industry and a range of government stakeholders; and
- Working with Grains Australia who fund the Chair NWPGP, on promotion of the NWPGP and its deliberations through various industry publications and on the GTA website.

The Chair commented on the number of participants representing all areas of the supply chain, noting that in 2022 and again in 2023 the Australian grain supply chain has been under significant pressure with all export shipping-based supply chains at capacity. Andrew commented that we all have a role to play in focusing on meeting market requirements despite it being a logistical challenge to outturn the large grain crop.

He also noted it is important to be aware the world is changing and our grain management systems are being increasingly scrutinised, which is why events like the Australian Grain Storage and Protection Conference are so important.

C. Continued Role of the National Working Party on Grain Protection

There was strong acknowledgement of the history, and more importantly, the key role that the NWPGP undertakes in assisting industry to manage outturn of grain that meets market contractual and regulatory requirements while being free of live stored grain insects. This includes the many stakeholders involved in providing technical advice and tools to meet those ever-increasing challenges.

Several administrative tasks were also discussed and **agreed**:

- 1) That the 2023 Conference outcomes be documented and distributed to all attendees.
- 2) That the outcomes of the 2023 Conference be placed on the NWPGP page on the GTA website and forwarded by GTA to all invitees, attendees and the wider grain industry via a GTA Member Update. See <http://www.graintrade.org.au/nwpgp>.
- 3) The NWPGP Strategic Working Group (SWG) be responsible for developing the agenda and assisting GTA to make arrangements for the next NWPGP annual Conference, to be held in 2024 in a suitable location. Industry feedback on agenda items, speakers and topics and other matters related to the Conference was encouraged in order to develop an agenda of relevance to the industry and attending audience.
- 4) A note of thanks was provided to:
 - i. GTA staff for their continued support of the NWPGP.
 - ii. SWG members.
 - iii. All sponsors of the 2023 NWPGP Conference, especially the Gold Sponsors as listed on the Conference agenda.

It was further **agreed**:

- 5) That the SWG continue to operate and provide oversight of relevant NWPGP activities, including addressing industry issues as they arise.

D. Communication & Extension Activities

The Conference was provided with an update on the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) Strategic Plan and the various extension and research activities they support throughout industry:

- The investment that occurs in a range of areas related to physical and chemical insect control measures, and all relevant aspects of grain storage, chemical use and grain hygiene.
- There are a number of support mechanisms for industry feedback, including the National Grower Network.
- The current and future directions of the Grain Storage and Extension Project were outlined:
 - There has been a continued focus on providing storage workshops for growers and other storage operators in all regions, with extension into areas of northern Australia.
 - The uptake of sealed storages, good management practices and effective chemical and non-chemical insect control measures on-farm continues, using further resource material produced on the stored grain website by the GRDC Extension Team.
- The need for increased advocacy on compliance with label directions, including export market quarantine treatments, was discussed at length.

It was **agreed:**

- 6) That the Chair NWPGP continue to liaise with relevant industry stakeholders on any matter relating to activities discussed under the auspices of the NWPGP.

E. Government and Regulatory Update

The Conference was provided with an update on a range of matters dealing with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and other international and domestic regulations and activities:

- The process and importance of the Codex process, and that undertaken by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) when reviewing whether to register a chemical and develop an MRL was highlighted.
- The APVMA are currently reviewing a number of chemicals of relevance to the grain industry.
- The significant input in Codex matters from the Australian Government and the benefits of that input to maintain the registration of chemicals and MRLs of importance to industry was acknowledged.
- Participation in the National Residue Survey (NRS) can be improved in some industry sectors. The importance of industry participation in the NRS was outlined, including as a requirement under the industry Code of Practice, to assist submissions to overseas governments on proposed changes to MRLs, as an audit of the effectiveness of industry management systems, and to assist resolution of market violations as they arise.
- Co-ordinated industry input via the NWPGP into developing the Australian Government position on various overseas MRL changes continues to be an important step in ensuring continued market access.

It was **agreed:**

- 7) That the Conference fully endorses the continuation of the Grains Australia funded project enabling the NWPGP Chairman on behalf of the Australian grains industry:
 - i. To provide input to and attend as required, international forums such as Codex; and
 - ii. To actively liaise with the NRS and national regulatory organisations such as the APVMA on chemical related matters.
- 8) That through the Grains Australia funded project, the NWPGP Chairman will:
 - i. Continue to liaise with industry to provide input to the NRS on matters relating to chemicals raised through SPS and other international processes; and
 - ii. Continue working with NRS to facilitate the establishment and or maintenance of overseas MRLs as requested by and on behalf of industry.

F. Insect Infestation Trends, Resistance & Grain Treatments

Insect species detected:

- An overview of the insect species detected in various locations in the last year was provided. There were no significant differences than in recent years.
- The outcome of research on infestations detected in various commodities and locations was provided.
- Industry is encouraged to provide insect samples to assist future research.

Stored grain treatments applied:

- No significant departures from prior year treatments have occurred or been required to control insects in the on-farm or Bulk Handling Company (BHC) sector. A mix of treatments, both grain protectants and fumigants, continues to be needed to prevent and control infestations in grain.

- It was emphasised that compliance with recommended label rates was not only a regulatory requirement but is also needed to adequately control all life stages of insects.

Insect Resistance:

- An update on the distribution and frequency of insect resistance in various storage types and locations to a range of chemicals in Australia was provided.
- In some sectors and species, insect resistance was found to be increasing, highlighting the need for effective management systems and compliance with the industry agreed Insect Resistance Management Strategy. Core principles under that Strategy were outlined, as well as plans to update that Strategy based on recent research findings.
- A range of current and alternative resistance management strategies to maximise the use of current insect treatments were being researched and future updates will be provided.

It was **agreed**:

- 9) The Insect Resistance Management Strategy be updated, with a briefer more-user friendly summary document developed and provided to industry to aid interpretation and implementation.
- 10) The Post-Harvest Chemical Usage Recommendations and Outturn Tolerances document for 2023/24:
 - i. Be revised as per the outcomes of the 2023 NWP GP Conference via liaison with the co-authors; and
 - ii. Is placed on the GTA website and distributed to industry.

G. Storage Update

The Conference was advised:

- The use of on-farm storage continues to increase, with growers in general being very well informed of best practice storage design and construction, and the impact on grain hygiene, quality and overall grain husbandry.
- Non-chemical techniques such as aeration continue to be adopted. Further research is being conducted to assist effective usage.
- The Australian Standard AS2628 for sealed storages, enabling effective fumigation for insect control, remains critical when guiding growers on what types of on-farm storages should be purchased.
- Insights into research using new technologies to manage and identify quality in storages were provided. This included a discussion on the impacts of temperature and moisture on grain quality and for insect management. The research showed the benefits of this technology and industry was encouraged to continue to support those research efforts.

H. Market Access

A range of topics were covered under this item. These included:

- Discussion on changes to Australian and export market MRLs and the process for review and industry involvement in those changes.
- Challenges in meeting market MRLs, including an outline of processes for improvement by all stakeholders along the supply chain.
- Continued improvements in the use and compliance with chemical usage, including evidence via an increased focus on the validity of information provided on Commodity Vendor Declarations, with a focus on the domestic stockfeed sector.

- Discussion raised the issues of sustainability, and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) increasingly being raised by markets for the grain industry to consider. Effective engagement with markets on Australia's grain management systems is needed.
- Compliance with label directions, including the prohibited practice of fumigating in road transport vehicles was again highlighted as an area that industry continually needs to improve.

National Residue Survey (NRS) Results:

- The NRS provided results of the monitoring program from the last 12 months, showing high compliance with MRLs for the domestic and export sectors. That said, it was recognised there is always room for improvement.
- General commodity summary results are available on the NRS website for use by industry.

It was **agreed**:

11) That the Conference fully endorses the NRS Grains program.

12) That the Conference fully supports:

- The activities of the NRS relating to pesticide residues, MRLs, and relevant market requirements, including those raised through WTO SPS and other international processes.
- The current NRS responsibility of providing market access advice and action to facilitate the establishment of overseas MRLs as requested by industry.

13) To continue to support the requirement for industry to outturn grain containing protectants at half the MRL for all existing grain protectants (ROL – recommended outturn limit).

I. Fumigant Issues

- An update on progress of potential changes to the phosphine label was provided and it was noted research is needed to ensure any potential changes to the time-weighted average (TWA) by SafeWork Australia are appropriately managed.
- Issues associated with industry compliance with the phosphine label, including research on venting of fumigant and resulting residues were again highlighted as needing future research.
- Various research activities were outlined reviewing the modes of action of various fumigants.
- The focus of the use of sulfuryl fluoride as a break fumigant for phosphine continues, with further research into its use outlined.
- The process for implementation of further mandatory controls by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) of fumigant use as a quarantine and pre-shipment treatment (QPS) was outlined.

It was **agreed**:

14) That the Phosphine Label Working Group be re-formed to seek progress of the research required to support a label change and to meet any potential reduction in the TWA.

15) That the NWPGP work with DAFF on a communication plan for the implementation of the additional QPS treatments controls.