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Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601 Email: Via Web

19th December 2019

# RE: Cost Recovery Implementation Statement: Plant Export Certification

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing regarding the call for submissions on the Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS) for the plant export certification services charged by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE).

Grain Trade Australia (GTA) is a member of a DAWE's Grain and Plant Products Export Industry Consultative Committee (GPPEICC). GTA is the focal point for the commercial grain industry within Australia. It facilitates trade and works to provide an efficient, equitable and open trading environment by providing leadership, advocacy and commercial services to the Australian grain value chain. GTA is non-political, industry driven with a primary focus to ensure the efficient facilitation of commercial activities across the grain supply chain including a strong focus on the logistics of grain through transport storage and ports.

GTA's has over 280 organisations as members ranging from regional family businesses to large national and international trading, storage and handling companies, grain marketers, consumers and processors. The vast majority of grain contracts executed in Australia refer to GTA grain trading standards, standard-form grain contracts and GTA Trade Rules. Most of Australia's grain storage and freight movements are made by GTA members. Key national and state producer representative groups are also GTA Members.

A list of GTA Members is attached.

# 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 as managed by DAWE to ensure grain meets importing country quarantine requirements. GTA fully supports those regulations and would not support any major changes that would jeopardise this reputation arising from the current cost review.

# 2. Value through Cost Recovery Mechanisms

GTA considers it is important to consider the effectiveness of the DAWE cost recovery model and the impact it has on the grain industry's efficiency. 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.

*However, cost recovery may not be warranted where:* 

- *it is not cost effective;*
- *it would be inconsistent with policy objectives; or*
- it would unduly stifle competition and industry innovation".

Whilst GTA supports cost recovery as a mechanism to provide key services not covered through Government consolidated revenue, it must be questioned whether the proposed increases in Export Certification fees in the draft CRIS for plant export certification 2019-20 are truly based on economic efficiency reasons rather than increasing revenue to accelerate the re-building of financial reserves depleted through the previous poor forecasting of costs and revenues.

The grain industry and GTA believes it is important to have a collaborative working relationship with DAWE so that value can be created through an aligned approach to the export market and export processes including the provision of an effective certification process. However, the proposed CRIS including the increase in charges does not articulate how the proposed changes will add value or benefit to industry.

GTA has been involved in several reviews of the operations of the plant export certification regulatory functions. Those reviews have highlighted potential improvements in the service delivered, resulting in potential cost savings to industry and DAWE and a reduction in the overall budget of the Plant Export Operations branch responsible for provision of the regulatory function.

Despite potential cost savings being identified, and the introduction of processes to reduce the DAWE cost base (e.g., industry Authorised Officers), the DAWE expenditure and budget has increased substantially over time.

A comparison of the 2015-16 CRIS versus the 2019-20 CRIS shows the increase in the export certification cost base over this timeframe and highlights the greater proportion of the cost borne by industry on indirect costs.

Table 1. Comparison of Cost Base 2015 - 2019

	12,738,000	15,837,343	24%
Indirect Cost	\$ 4,153,000	\$ 5,680,972	37%
Direct Cost	\$ 8,585,000	\$ 10,156,371	18%
	2015-16 CRIS	2019-20 CRIS	% Var

It is understood that DAWE have recently indicated under-charging (and not charging appropriately for some services) and therefore the overall cost base was "under-quoted". This raises a concern as to accuracy of the CRIS and whether DAWE is truly able to measure and attribute its costs on a fee for service model.

GTA considers there is room to improve the transparency across the overall certification cost budget and especially in the area of indirect costs where the indirect cost base is reported to have increased by 37% since 2015. Better and more detailed consultation is warranted to explain the reasons for the increase in costs.

Benchmarking against other export programs and government departments would create greater transparency of the overall costs borne by the grain industry. We would encourage specific examples, and metrics such as FTE (full-time equivalent) information to be included. GTA is aware there is a sense of frustration within industry (i.e., fee payers) that there is little scope to interrogate or analyse actual costs as, to the fee payers the nature of the charges appears fluid and subjective. Additionally, the fluid nature of the "explanation" for the cost basis means that clear and transparent explanations for proposed changes are difficult to develop and be readily understood by industry.

Coupled with the overall cost pressures on industry (particularly as a result of the current drought), GTA encourages DAWE to provide more meaningful and easily interpreted reasons for all cost changes through development of appropriate Fact Sheets. Whilst DAWE is to be congratulated on being available to industry (as demonstrated by the number of teleconferences held) the joint development of Fact Sheets by DAWE/GPPEICC for provision to industry in the lead-up to release of any new charges expected by June 2020 maybe considered to be of value.

# 3. Significant Cost Recovery Changes

It is noted the most significant change in the cost base of the 2019-20 CRIS is a reduction of \$1.8m which reflects decreased demand for Departmental inspection activities associated with the industry uptake of the Authorised Officer Program.

However, this was almost entirely offset by the implementation of an additional cost of \$1.03m (7% of the forecast cost base) for what is said to be a new government policy of including enforcement, scientific and technical advice and support for detained consignments.

GTA questions the quantum of this increase and the labelling of it as a new government policy as, we understand, detained consignments costs have been included in the export certification cost base from at least 2015.

GTA has previously advised that the proposed model of charges of plant exporter levies (per tonne charge) and the inspection fees (per quarter hour charge) is a compromise of industry views with previous proposals not fully supported by specific industry sectors. There are significant proposed increases in both services, with the latter potentially significantly impacting on the smaller export sector (i.e., containers). Despite explanations from DAWE, it is still not fully clear to industry the nature of the proposed increase in charges for the quarter hour fee. GTA have been advised the Authorised Officer fees (application, annual and approval) have increased to reflect the increased effort of this DAWE activity in relation to export activities. The CRIS proposes a per-module learning and assessment fee rather than the current fee covering "2-5 modules". The cost impact of this change on AOs will be significant. Conversely the charges for Establishment Registration have only "modestly increased" to reflect the lesser effort involved in those activities. The change in fees cannot be considered "modest" nor reflective of cost increases of comparative measures such as CPI.

# 4. Efficiency or Cost Transfer

It is somewhat disappointing that industry has experienced consistent increases in export certification fees whilst proactively accepting the challenge and additional costs to exporters of the Authorised Officer Program.

The drought currently impacting much of Australia has exacerbated the challenge for industry given the annual fixed cost (internal cost and DAWE fees) in maintaining accredited AOs that is met by industry. These costs either must be absorbed by the registered export facility or are passed through to exporters.

Consequently, GTA members are rightfully questioning if the arrangement of employing and providing AOs is equitable and sustainable in the current environment. It is understood in some regions export facilities and third-party providers have ceased or reduced the number of AO services, that are currently underutilised due to the drought, to manage their own cost base issues.

This will lead to consequences for DAWE, as well as industry, as exporting of grain recommences. There will be a significant lag in timeframe in training AOs to meet industry requirements, noting that the reduction in DAWE AOs will not provide a suitable number of replacement AOs to meet the shortfall.

GTA requests that due to the current drought, there is a need to maintain enough AOs to meet future demand. Options to provide incentives to maintain the AO workforce numbers should be explored by DAWE in conjunction with GPPEICC to include:

- Government meeting various AO charges out of consolidated revenue (i.e., taxpayer subsidy) to reflect the need and ability of industry to meet the 2030 target of \$100b in agricultural exports.
- Some funding of AO's being met from the Governments Bio-Security program and budgets, noting the importance of AO's to overall bio-security, and that AO's could be utilised for import inspections, and thus from a practical view maintain their accreditation status to ensure sufficient AO's are available for the eventual pickup in plant exports.
- The cost recovery arrangements being altered to focus on a reduced cost base for AO's in the short-term while the drought impacts on the industry.

# 5. Adoption of IT Systems & Technology

Industry has been patient with the process of transformational change of DAWE's information technology. This long-awaited upgrade and the centralisation of key documentation have been identified as key activities to reduce DAWE costs. While some operational efficiencies have occurred, implementation of updated systems has been slow, and the overall cost reduction is unclear.

Adoption of improved technology to support the centralisation of activities is yet to result in significant improvements in overall performance of those functions. Costs should be reduced and timeframes for provision of service should be significantly reduced as a result of improved technology.

Industry adoption of technology is rapidly occurring, as highlighted by the establishment of <u>Covantis</u> a joint venture initiative of six global grain traders. The potential exists for the value of these initiatives to be negatively impacted both operationally and on an overall cost basis if concurrent adoption of technology and linkage with industry systems is not effectively managed nor adopted by DAWE.

# 6. Strategic Plan Requirement

Whilst GTA acknowledge at times DAWE struggles to obtain government funds for underlying DAWE services and operations' we believe there is a strong case, in terms of long-term cost reduction and productivity gains, for Government to consider its Strategic Plan for the grain export certification process and invest for the long term benefit of industry.

DAWE should consider how to align with the Government's policies of Modernising Agriculture and the vision to grow Agriculture industry value to \$100 billion by 2030 and commit to strategic investments, especially in technology.

Investment to confirm and implement a strategy is required to provide a framework that will support these processes into the future. The industry is evolving, and DAWE services must evolve concurrently. A strategy to improve inspection and certification processes, including investing in automated grain image analysis, electronic documentation (such as Commodity Vendor Declarations) that can "follow" grain through the supply chain are required.

A significant funding strategy for all key areas where technology may assist industry and DAWE perform tasks related to export service is required. Again, we would urge a robust and transparent discussion with DAWE at GPPEICC to assist in shaping and developing this strategy, including clear adoption strategies outlined in the short to medium term. Such investment needs to be forward looking/future proofing, and in addition to improving current manual processes and procedures.

# 7. Summary

- The proposed cost increases in the CRIS are substantial, and arguably an exercise in revenue raising over and above economic efficiency rationale.
- Improved transparency and performance metrics are sought on the overall cost base and each key charge.
- Industry cannot continue to absorb these increased costs without efficiency gains and/or improved services.
- Efficiency needs to come from an agreed Strategy to future proof the certification process, including:
  - o Improving current processes; and
  - A commitment to a long-term strategy to invest and uptake technology including-
    - Grain Image Assessment;
    - Information technology to facilitate electronic documentation such as e-CVDs, and documentation exchange and development between DA and industry.

GTA consider such proposals to be aligned with the Government's policies of Modernising Agriculture and the vision to grow Agriculture industry value to \$100 billion by 2030.

For your information, in addition to the Department's formal notice to Industry, GTA called for submissions from its Members on these issues and has reviewed the issues through its Technical Committee structures.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to contact GTA at any stage to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

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Pat O'Shannassy CEO, Grain Trade Australia



# GRAIN TRADE AUSTRALIA

# Membership List as at 13 December 2019

Organisation	Contact	Website /Phor
nary Member (Trading)		
Level A1 (over 7 Million Tonnes)		
CBH Grain Pty Ltd	Mr Jason Craig	cbh.com.a
Glencore Agriculture Pty Ltd	Mr Philip Hughes	glencoreagriculture.com.a
Level A2 (5 - 7 Million Tonnes)		
Graincorp Operations Ltd	Mr Klaus Pamminger	graincorp.com.a
Level A3 (3 - 5 Million Tonnes)		
ADM Trading Australia Pty Ltd	Mr Darryl Borlase	adm.co
Cargill Australia Limited	Mr Erik Wibholm	cargill.com.a
		cargin.com.
Level A4 (1.5 - 3 Million Tonnes)		
Level B1 (1.0 - 1.5 Million Tonnes)		
Arrow Commodities Pty Ltd	Mr Dominic Vanzella	arrowcom.com.a
Emerald Grain Pty Limited	Mr David Johnson	emeraldgrain.co
Cofco International	Ms Sara Pan	cofcoagri.com.
Level B2 (500,000 - 1 Million Tonnes)		
Australian Grain Export Pty Ltd	Mr Brett Dodson	australiangrainexport.com.
CHS Broadbent Pty Ltd	Mr Steve Broadbent	broadbentgrain.com.a
Centre State Exports Pty Ltd	Mr Jeff Voigt	centrestateexports.com.
George Weston Foods Limited	Mr Mark O'Brien	gwf.com.
Ridley Agriproducts Pty Ltd	Mr Michael Reeves	agriproducts.com.
Riordan Grain Services	Mr Mark Lewis	riordangrains.com.
Riverina (Australia) Pty Ltd	Mr Gareth Stapleton	riverina.com.
Bunge Agribusiness Australia Pty Ltd	Mr Stephen Bennett	bunge.com/agribusine
Level B3 (250,000 - 500,000 Tonnes)		
Agfarm Pty Ltd	Mr Ron McCalman	agfarm.com.
Agracom Pty Ltd	Mr Joe Hallman	agracom.com.a
Agrisk Management Pty Ltd	Mr Brett Stevenson	02 9499 41
Allied Pinnacle Pty Ltd	Mr Josh Lawrence	alliedpinnacle.co
Robinson Grain Trading Co Pty Ltd	Mr Gary Robinson	robinsongrain.com.
Wilmar Gavilon Pty Ltd	Mr Matt Albion	07 3713 870
Louis Dreyfus Company Australia Pty Ltd	Mr Sam Roache	louisdreyfus.com.
Quadra Commodities Pty Ltd	Mr Robin Cassar	quadra.co

Ordinary Member (Trading) Level C (under 250,000 Tonnes) A T Waterfield & Son Pty Ltd A W Vater and Co AACL Ptv Ltd Access Grain Pty Ltd Adams Australia Pty Ltd Agmark Commodities Agri Om Australia Pty Ltd Agri-Oz Exports Pty Ltd Agriex Australia Pty Ltd Agrifoods Australia Agrigrain Agromin Australia Pty Limited AGT Foods Australia Associated Grain Auscott Ltd AusiCan Commodities Australian - Asian Agricultural Exports Pty Ltd Australian Choice Exports Pty Ltd Australian Fresh Milk Holdings (AFMH) Australian Grain Storage Australian Growers Direct Pty Ltd Australian Mungbean Company Pty Ltd Australian Storage Alliance Pty Ltd Baker Grain BFB Pty Ltd **Blairs Produce Company** Boolah Grains Ptv Ltd Boort Grain Co-Operative Broun and Co Grain Pty Ltd C & S Trading Pty Ltd C K Tremlett Pty Ltd **Carpendale Commodities** Cameron Pastoral Company Pty Ltd Castlegate James Australasia Pty Ltd CL Commodities Pty Ltd Continental Grain Handling Pty Ltd (CGH) Coorow Seeds Coprice Cremer Australia Pty Ltd Dalby Bio-Refining Limited Darwalla Milling Co Pty Ltd Deacon Seeds Company Deckert Group Pty Ltd Defiance Maize Products Pty Ltd Demeter Cormack Pty Ltd Direct Commodities Pty Ltd Donnellons Bulk Haulage Pty Ltd East Coast Stockfeed Pty Ltd **Elders** Grain Ellerslie Free Range Farms Pty Ltd

#### Level C (under 250,000 Tonnes) cont.

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Mr Gary Heidenreich Mr Mark Schmidt Mr Chris Deckert Mr Rodney Walker Mr David Oates Mr Hamish Robertson Mr Bill Donnellon

Mr Lachlan Allen Mr Bruce Holden

Mr Neil Wandel Mr Shayne Clark Mr Tim Ford

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## **Broker**

# Large

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# Corporate

## Large

ASX Limited Australia And New Zealand Banking Group Australian Grain Technologies Pty Ltd Commonwealth Bank of Australia

# Medium

AgriDigital Agrifood Technology Pty Ltd Amspec Australia Pty Ltd Australian Superintendence Company Commodity Inspection Services (Australia) Pty Ltd Foss Pacific Pty Ltd Holding Redlich Holman Fenwick Willan Intertek SBA Law SGS Australia Pty Ltd T-Ports Pty Ltd Viridis Ag Mr Hugh Cox Mr Bikash Ram

Mr Jeff Winspear

Mr Ash Munro

Mr Brett Cooper

Mr Peter Geary

Mr Tim Teague

Mr Adam Clarke

Mr Robert Luetolf

Mr Rowan Relton

Mr Matt Henke

Mr Todd Lees

Mr Ian Mallon

Ms Javne Barker

Mr Ian Waddell

Mr Ian Hanrahan

Mr Tristan Coram

Mr Tom Barraket

Mr Henry McKay

Mr Lee Shilvock

Mr Andrew Parry

Mr Phil Soderberg

Mr Ben Jones

Mr Geoff Farnsworth

Mr Stephen Thompson

Mr Jeremy Rosenthal

Mr Anthony Howard

Mr Scot Paterson

Mr Kieran Carvill

Ms Doreen Fernandez

Ms Katrina Saunderson

Mr Rodney Edgerton

Mr Hamish Steele-Park

Mr Angus Wettenhall

Mr Craig Perkins

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## **International Affiliate**

CCIC Australia Pty Ltd CIS - Commodity Inspection Services

## **Industry Association**

Australia Export Grain Innovation Centre Grain Growers Limited Grain Industry Association of WA Grain Producers Australia Ltd NSW Farmers Association Victorian Farmers Federation Mr Ed Scamps Mr Michael Parry Ms Tracey Lehmann Mr Donald McTaggart Mr Robert Imray Mr Malcolm Finlayson Mr Jarrod Tonkin Mr Geoff Webb Mr Lucas Anstiss Mr Chris Hood Mr Stephen Schumacher Mr Ron Harris Mr Peter McMeekin Mr Ole Houe Mr Lachie Stevens Mr Mark Martin Mr Gerard McMullen Mr Scott Still Mr Adam Davis Mr Mark Murphy Ms Debbie Newmarch Mr Yasuhide Okumura Mr Raul Ovelar Mr Rod Buckle Mr Jerome Critch Mr Mark Sloan Mr Peter Longhurst Ms Hannah Janson Mr Ian Dalgliesh Mr Chris Heinjus Mr Robert Ford Mr David Hudson Mr Tom Hage Mr Chris Tonkin Jon Bucknall

Mr Isherwood Feng Mr Paul Schweitzer

Mr Richard Simonaitis D. McKeon Ms Larissa Taylor Mr Andrew Weidemann Ms Alexandra Bunton Ms Annabel Mactier

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## **Merchant Association**

Grain Industry Association of SA Grain Industry Association Of Victoria Grain NSW Inc Mr Ben Noll Mr Colin Peace Ms Joanne Ware +61 8 8361 5601 giav.com.au grainnsw.com.au Queensland Agricultural Merchants Inc.

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# Life Members

Mr Mervyn May Mr Christopher Kelly Mr Geoff Honey Mr Terry Deacon Awarded 1998 Awarded July 2015 Awarded July 2016 Awarded August 2019