



2024 AUSTRALIAN GRAIN STORAGE & PROTECTION CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

This File Note lists outcomes agreed by the 2024 Australian Grain Storage & Protection Conference (Conference), hosted by the National Working Party on Grain Protection (NWPGP) in Melbourne on 5-6 June 2024.

There were 180 attendees at the Conference, 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 51st annual conference of the NWPGP and the increasing number of delegates highlights the importance it plays in the grain industry.
- Compliance with domestic and export market chemical Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) continues to remain at high levels.
- Industry advocacy and management systems supported by the science combined with stewardship within the supply chain continues to enhance the reputation of the Australian grain industry as a provider of a quality and safe product.

B. Official Welcome

The Deputy Chair of Grain Trade Australia (GTA), Michelle Kerr, opened the Conference and emphasised the industry and supply chain are under increased scrutiny, especially for food safety and sustainability. Continued compliance with market requirements, including the underlying industry self-regulatory management systems was highlighted as a necessity when trading grain.

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 means.

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

Attendees heard of the key role that the NWPGP undertakes in assisting industry to manage outturn of grain to ensure that it meets market contractual and regulatory requirements, while being free of live stored grain insects. This includes liaison with the many stakeholders involved in providing technical advice and tools to meet those ever-increasing challenges.

Several administrative tasks were **agreed**:

- 1) That the 2024 Conference outcomes be documented and 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>.
- 2) The NWPGP Strategic Working Group (SWG) be responsible for developing the agenda and assisting GTA to make arrangements for the 2025 NWPGP annual Conference.
- 3) The Chair NWPGP thanked attendees for feedback on the most recent conference. Industry feedback on the 2024 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 in 2025.
- 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 2024 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 given an update on a range of extension activities provided by various industry sectors. This included the valuable funding provided by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) to support the Extension Team. Those stakeholders assist industry to take the findings of core research and apply it to the practicalities of storing and managing grain throughout the supply chain.

Several speakers highlighted the use of that information generated and the critical nature of continued investment in communicating to industry the elements to be managed when storing grain in an insect free condition and of a quality required by the marketplace. As well as chemical control methods, the range of non-chemical control methods were also highlighted, including aeration and hygiene.

For the first time at the conference, audience polls were used to gather feedback on topics of relevance to the audience and industry. The results highlighted a range of issues, including the continued need for advocacy and assisting to implement practical measures to manage grain quality and food safety while grain is held in storage.

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 and the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) when registering, reviewing and revising MRLs was highlighted.
- Timelines for the review of various chemicals registered in Australia were outlined. It was highlighted that several of those chemicals are of particular relevance to the grain industry. Plans for industry feedback on key chemistry were discussed.
- 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.

- The role and importance of industry participation in the National Residue Survey (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. Results of the past year testing program were outlined, showing good industry compliance with requirements in most instances.
- 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**:

- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) A Working Group be formed to provide industry input into the current APVMA review of fenitrothion, a key chemical used by sectors of industry to assist in maintaining grain insect free.

F. Insect Infestation Trends, Resistance & Grain Treatments

Insect species detected:

- An overview of the insect species detected in various storage locations in the last year was provided. The difficulties faced by industry in managing those insects under different climatic conditions by insect species present, was discussed at length.
- The outcome of research on alternative methods to prevent infestations in various commodities and locations was provided.

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.
- The use of non-chemical control methods, including hygiene of structures and structural treatments, was highlighted as complimentary with those chemical control methods.

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.

It was **agreed**:

- 9) The Insect Resistance Management Strategy be updated, supplemented by a document specifically for phosphine to aid industry interpretation and implementation.
- 10) The Post-Harvest Chemical Usage Recommendations and Outturn Tolerances document for 2024/25:
 - i. Be developed as per the outcomes of the 2024 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 to a greater extent using storage for a range of purposes including harvest management, and marketing grain throughout the year.
- Non-chemical techniques such as aeration continue to be researched and practical measures for implementation in storages adopted.
- The impact of temperature and moisture on grain quality and for insect management was highlighted for a number of commodities currently being researched. The research shows the benefits of this technology in managing grain quality and further work will continue.

H. Market Access

A range of topics were covered highlighting industry efforts to meet market expectations. These included:

- Recent and impending changes to Australian and export market MRLs and the impact on industry. The process for those reviews was outlined and industry involvement in providing feedback on those changes was encouraged.
- Challenges in meeting market MRLs, given the prior loss and impending loss of key chemistry was highlighted.
- Continued improvements in compliance with regulatory requirements, including transparency of management systems and chemical use, was encouraged given markets are increasingly demanding greater knowledge of how grain is managed before supply.
- Discussion also focussed on a range of sustainability matters, and the need for industry to meet market expectations in future.
- Compliance with future market requirements was a continual theme and the proposed new Grain Storage Assets and Management Standard was noted as one tool to assist industry to portray its credentials in that area.
- The NRS provided results of the monitoring program from the last 12 months, showing high compliance with MRLs for the domestic and export sectors.
- 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:
 - i. The activities of the NRS relating to pesticide residues, MRLs, and relevant market requirements, including those raised through WTO SPS and other international processes.
 - ii. 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

- Issues associated with industry compliance with the phosphine label, including research on venting of fumigant and resulting residues were again highlighted as needing future work.
- 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 industry working with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) on the use of fumigants as a quarantine and pre-shipment treatment (QPS) was outlined. The need for compliance with regulations was re-iterated.

It was **agreed**:

- 14) A Working Group be formed to progress work on revision of the phosphine label to ensure it is up to date with clear instructions that assist insect management and meets current usage obligations. Similarly, this Working Group will include review the proposed Safe Work Australia Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL) for airborne contaminants, specifically the proposed significant WEL reduction for phosphine and the implications for all users and the management of grain along the supply chain.
- 15) That the Working Group between industry and DAFF on implementation of the QPS treatment controls continue their activities.