

**GPA Biosecurity Committee – MINUTES**  
**2 September 2021, 12pm to 1.30pm AEST, Via Zoom.**

**Attendees**

Organisation	Role	Name	Email	Notes
GPA	Chair			Yes
GPA	GPABC Chair			Apology
GPA	Chief Executive			Yes
GPA	Company Secretary			Yes
GPSA	Staff			Yes
GPSA	Committee			Yes
NSWF	Committee			Yes
NSWF	Staff			Yes
NSWF	Staff			Apology
NSWF	Staff			Yes
AgForce	Committee			Yes
AgForce	Committee			Yes
AgForce	Staff			Yes
VFF	Committee			Yes
VFF	Staff			Apology
VFF	Staff			Apology
WAF	Staff			Yes
WAGG	Committee			Yes
TFGA	Staff			Apology
PHA	General Manager, Emergency Response			Yes
PHA	National Manager, Preparedness and RD&E			Yes
GGL	Chair GGL			From 1pm
GGL	General Manager, Policy & Advocacy			From 1pm

**MINUTES**

1. Barry Large provided an apology and tabled Chair's report (attached) GPA Chair Andrew Weidemann Chaired this meeting.

**2. Plant Health Australia (PHA) Presentation**

Dr Susanna Driessen - PHA General Manager Emergency Response - provided members with an overview and presentation of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) of which PHA is the custodian.

The Deed is a formal legally binding agreement between PHA, the Australian Government, State and Territory governments and national plant industry body signatories (including GPA). It covers the management and funding of responses to emergency plant pest (EPP) incidents, including the potential for owner reimbursement costs for growers. It also formalises the role of plant industries' participation in decision making, as well as their contribution towards the costs related to approved responses. The ratification of the EPPRD

in 2005 significantly increased Australia's capacity to respond to emergency plant pest incursions. The key advantage of the EPPRD is more timely, effective and efficient response to plant pest incursions, while minimising uncertainty over management and funding arrangements.

Other significant benefits include:

- potential liabilities are known and funding mechanisms are agreed in advance
- industry is directly involved in decision making about mounting and managing an emergency plant pest response from the outset
- a consistent and agreed national approach for managing incursions; including communication protocols and confidentiality agreements
- wider commitment to risk mitigation by all parties through the development and implementation of biosecurity strategies and programs
- motivation and rationale to maintain a reserve of trained personnel and technical expertise
- provision of accountability and transparency to all parties.

Examples NOTED were the Red Witch Weed (RWW) eradication program and Khapra Beetle incursions that are delivering successful outcomes to date. In the case of the RWW program, significant negotiations were required to ensure an equitable funding arrangements were structured to share the cost fairly and not impose too heavy a load on particular sectors of the grains industry.

It was agreed that a set of talking points and communiques prepared by PHA would be useful to all signatories in presenting and maintaining consistent messaging on the various control measures as they arise from time to time.

**3. Biosecurity Incidences Overview – Stuart Kearns PHA National Manager, Preparedness & RD&E**

This Farm Biosecurity Program has been reviewed over the last two years but has slowed due to COVID. The program (now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year) is a partnership of PHA, grains industry through GPA and grain growing State governments, each providing a Biosecurity Officer to actively monitor and engage with growers to address and advise on grain biosecurity issues. There is a need to ramp up engagement in some states, but COVID has curtailed direct contact. Online material is being developed as an alternative along with ensuring that the Biosecurity Officers are involved in decision making with State agencies. Possible partnering with private sector organisations is being explored.

**4. GGL Presentation - Grain Growers Biosecurity Situation Analysis Summary for Stakeholders**

GGL Chair Brett Hosking and Policy Manager Zachery Whale – *joined meeting at 1pm*  
GGL commissioned a high-level grains biosecurity situation analysis during June/July 2021.

The purpose was to provide Grain Growers with information to assist them to identify priorities and approaches for increased engagement in grains biosecurity.

Stakeholder identified issues and priorities were as follows:

- The biosecurity challenge is continuing to increase
- Containerised trade is an important current risk:
- Australia's biosecurity system requires appropriate resourcing
- Increased industry/government information would be beneficial
- Engage industry to prepare for emergency response
- Biosecurity is a whole of community responsibility

- Understanding post border container hygiene might be important  
Other threats and long-term trends should also be monitored

Overall, it was pleasing to note that there did not appear to be any obvious gaps in current national biosecurity systems.

No feedback was received to indicate that GPA was doing a bad job.

GPA needs to focus on engagement (similar to red meat) with the entire grain supply chain not just the growers - GPA has been working to this end for some time.

Grain Growers were invited to provide details from the report in regard to GPA's role managing biosecurity under the Deed. In light of the Committee's role, the need to avoid duplication of tasks, and appointment of a new policy officer focussed on biosecurity matters, GGL was invited to join GPA's Biosecurity Committee, to strengthen outcomes for growers.

**5. Container Levy and Traceability**

GPA is developing policy regarding this issue to ensure better engagement with the industry and obligations under the EPPRD.

Introduction of electronic tracing of containers has been included in recent Federal funding. Market access issue – containers need to be clean on entry and exit to/from Australia.

**6. Potential Project Work – Federal Funding Opportunities**

With the Federal Government announcement of \$370m biosecurity funds GPA has been discussing potential projects with PHA and will bring proposals to this committee for consideration and submission to obtain grant funding.

**7. Use of GRDC Levy-payer Database to Enhance Grower Communication/Outcomes**

GPA would like to access to this database to rapidly contact growers at times of biosecurity crisis – GGL indicated it supports this approach or any other appropriate mechanism like use of the Property Identification Code (PIC).

NOTED that State governments use different platforms that slow down the roll out of urgent information.

**8. Next Meeting** – date to be advised but will be a regular bi-monthly meeting with additional meetings as needed when specific issues arise.

Meeting closed 1:35pm

Friday, 19 August 2022

Senator the Hon. Murray Watt MP  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Minister for Emergency Management  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email:

Dear Minister Watt,

**RE: Transparency in funding of Australia's Plant Biosecurity System, invite to address the Plant Industry Forum**

I write on behalf of the thirty-nine Plant Industries that constitute the Plant Industries Forum under Plant Health Australia. Congratulations on your recent appointment to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry ministry, I wish you every success.

I note with interest your handling of the current biosecurity threat of Foot and Mouth Disease and the incursion of Varroa mite. It has been a baptism of fire which will no doubt heighten your awareness of the threats to Australian agriculture, the environment and our communities.

The Plant Industry Forum has sought to raise the importance of resourcing of Plant Biosecurity with the former government, in particular the need for state and territory governments to be transparent in their biosecurity budgets and the need for coordination and collaboration with the federal government, so that we are addressing the risks of incursion and are prepared.

I write to you today to highlight Plant Industries concerns that biosecurity funding for the plant sector has fallen to unsustainable levels, to call out the lack of transparency in State Agency reporting and to call on the federal government to take every measure possible to ensure Plant Biosecurity is adequately funded by all jurisdictions and the Commonwealth.

The Plant Industries represent a combined annual value to the Australian economy in excess of \$43.2 billion and growth in the sector is tipped to contribute significantly to the goal of \$100 billion by 2030.

The national biosecurity system has been valued recently by the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA), at a Net Present Value of \$314 billion, with an average return on investment of 30:1.

Despite Plant Industries' contribution of 54% (\$43.2 billion) of farm gate value across total agriculture production of \$73 billion (ABARES 2021-22), government budgets consistently allocate plant biosecurity less than one third of the annual funding investment.

Government agencies are in many cases the only suppliers of these services and reduced funding has resulted in:

- Reduced capacity and capability resulting in unacceptable service standards
- A failure to keep pace with Plant Industries' technology advancements, production scale, import and export of plant material
- Limited resources stretched to deal with responses, resulting in no capacity for adoption of new technologies and processes.

Plant Industries are asking for significant government reform to increase capacity and capability of these critical government services and system change. This has demands an increased investment to implement, adopt and deliver the necessary system change to ensure Australia's Agriculture sector continues to be prosperous and response ready.

The undersigned industries are signatories to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) and have invested approximately \$22 million as well and provided significant in kind support alongside all Australian governments over the past 10 years, cost sharing emergency responses such as citrus canker, brown marmorated stink bug, chestnut blight, banana freckle, khapra beetle, giant pine scale, tomato potato psyllid, Torres Strait fruit fly and Varroa mite. In addition, Plant Industries invest RD&E levies into extensive preparedness projects and activities which add up to millions of dollars annually. Many Plant Industries do not have specialist staff to work on biosecurity and responses which places further stress on the system.

On behalf of the members of the Plant Industries Forum, I invite you to the next Plant Industry Forum to be held on 29 November to address members on your governments plan to address the diminishing efficacy of the Australian plant biosecurity system and jurisdiction's failure to maintain an appropriate capacity and capability within plant biosecurity departments across all levels of government. I have attached a briefing paper with additional background information. I would welcome an opportunity to brief you further on behalf of the Plant Industries.

Yours faithfully,

Nathan Hancock  
Chairperson  
Plant Industries Forum

## **Attachment 1.**

### **Plant Industries Forum AGMIN Briefing Paper – December 2021**

#### **Briefing paper: Plant biosecurity funding must be prioritised**

Plant Industries contribute approximately 54% (\$43.2 billion) of farm gate value to a total agriculture production of \$73 billion (ABARES 2021-22). However, budgets across States and Territories consistently allocate plant biosecurity less than one third of the annual funding investment.

- Plant biosecurity is vital to Australian Plant Industries productivity and to our ability to access domestic and international markets for our products
- Plant biosecurity is also a service where many of the actions, currently, can only be undertaken by government
- Plant biosecurity systems are required to manage a large number of biosecurity incidences often concurrently.

#### **The issue**

Low levels of resourcing are limiting plant biosecurity agencies in their ability to adapt to meet growing threats and opportunities, costing plant industry productivity tens of millions of dollars annually and increasing the overall risk of our plant biosecurity system failing. Reduced plant industry productivity will be a significant impediment to the sector's contribution in achieving the goal of \$100 billion agriculture production value by 2030.

#### **Plant Biosecurity is beyond capacity**

Due to the volume and frequency of plant pest incursions, pest management and trade requirements Plant Industries work more closely with our biosecurity agencies than any other sector. Therefore, Plant Industries are aware of the high workload our plant biosecurity agencies are exposed to on a day-to-day basis. Australia is exposed to an average forty (40) exotic plant pest incursions annually, compared to less than one (1) for animals.

Despite the obvious need for increased capacity and capability the opposite is occurring, and our plant biosecurity agencies are therefore constantly overloaded due to restricted resourcing levels. Government's history of investment in biosecurity for Plant Industries demonstrates a systemic lack of support for Plant Industries. Plant biosecurity is further disadvantaged because commonly when there is a pest incursion, that doesn't directly affect an animals immediate health status, response activities are assigned to the plant biosecurity sector (despite the long-term potential to affect the animal's health i.e. reduced food sources) thus further stretching capacity and capability in plant biosecurity.

#### **Shared responsibility model**

The combined efforts of state and commonwealth departments of agriculture, under the guidance of the National Biosecurity Committee, are currently pulling together another biosecurity strategy (National Biosecurity Strategy) to provide strategic direction for the Australian biosecurity system through to 2030. Plant Industries are, again, seeing the same items in this strategy as seen in every other strategy developed over the past 25 years.

However, it appears there is an unwillingness to recognise very little advancement has been made against the past strategies and, apparently, recycling the same goals, objectives and outcomes is acceptable without acknowledging the past failures.

It provides no comfort to Plant Industries that the proposed strategy identifies all the same elements, particularly within plant biosecurity because there's been little we can celebrate as success from the previous decades of such strategic plans.

Regardless of the willingness to adopt the new strategy, without an implementation plan and appropriate budget, jurisdictions do not have the **plant biosecurity** capacity or capability to implement the initiatives, whether they are old or new. Further to this, there are no resources to update legislation and other legal instruments (critical for a shared responsibility), no capacity to work with proactive stakeholders, a lack of capacity to take on reform and new systems and technologies, and an over reliance on income from existing fees and charges just to make budget, and no incentive to change.

### **Transparency in biosecurity**

Plant Industries are calling on all Agriculture Ministers to acknowledge governments have failed to implement critical recommendations, in support of **plant biosecurity**, made in every biosecurity review (state and commonwealth) since Nairn released the *Australian Quarantine a shared responsibility* report in 1997. When Beale reported in his 2008 review, *One biosecurity: a working partnership*, almost identical issues were identified 10 years after Nairn and this has been replicated in the Craik 2017 review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB), *Priorities for Australia's biosecurity system*.

Significantly, many of these reports failed to clearly identify the declining capacity and capability across the **plant biosecurity** agencies as successive governments simply defunded agricultural agencies to support other initiatives.

The time has come to address this issue head on, our \$43.2 billion Plant Industries are under severe threat as are our natural and built environments due to under resourcing by consecutive governments. An important recommendation of the Craik report was the requirement for reporting performance publicly to provide more transparency of the activity and investment by each jurisdiction. Plant Industries expect this to be further expanded to require that funding be broken into plant, animal, invasive species and animal welfare categories within the biosecurity investment.

The importance of transparency by state and territory governments regarding spending on biosecurity and the need for coordination and collaboration with the federal government cannot be understated. Without it we are blind to the risks created by our ability to be prepared.

Plant Health Australia – Plant Industry Forum Members	Plant Health Australia – Plant Industry Forum Members
Industry Members	Industry Members
Almond Board of Australia Inc	Avocados Australia Ltd
Apple and Pear Australia Ltd	CANEGROWERS
Australian Banana Growers' Council Inc.	Canned Fruits Industry Council of Australia
Australian Blueberry Growers' Association	Cherry Growers of Australia Inc.
Australian Forest Products Association	Chestnuts Australia Incorporated
Australian Ginger Industry Association Incorporated	Citrus Australia
Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated	Cotton Australia Ltd
Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc	Dried Fruits Australia Inc.
Australian Lychee Growers Association	Grain Producers Australia
Australian Macadamia Society Ltd	Greenlife Industry Australia
Australian Mango Industry Association Ltd	Hazelnut Growers of Australia Incorporated
Australian Melon Association	Growcom Fruit
Australian Olive Association	Onions Australia
Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc.	Passionfruit Australia Incorporated
Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc	Pistachio Growers Association Incorporated
Australian Table Grape Association Inc.	Raspberries and Blackberries Australia Inc.
Australian Tea Tree Industry Association	Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc.
Australian Truffle Growers' Association	Strawberries Australia
Australian Walnut Industry Association	Summerfruit Australia Limited
AUSVEG Ltd	



30 June 2020

Sent via email [Minister.Littleproud@awe.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Littleproud@awe.gov.au)  
[david.littleproud.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:david.littleproud.mp@aph.gov.au)

Hon David Littleproud  
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600

Dear Minister Littleproud

**RE: Onshore Biosecurity Levy**

I write on behalf of the Plant Industry Members of Plant Health Australia to express our disappointment at the decision not to proceed with the Onshore Biosecurity levy as announced by your Department on 20 May 2020.

All the Plant Industries (listed below), who are members of Plant Health Australia and signatories to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), have shown their commitment to their industry biosecurity roles and responsibilities and to Australian's Biosecurity system in general.

Many of the industries have been partners with Government in responding to a range of exotic pest incidents and committed grower resources through the EPPR or PHA Levy to fund their share of responding to the costs of these incidents.

What is most frustrating is that on many occasions the 'risk creators' are not paying anything towards exotic outbreaks. Many plant industries have been involved in responses to outbreaks of Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs (BMSB). The entry of BMSB into Australia has been in general cargo and containers that are bringing in furniture, equipment and other products that have no linkages to the plant sector. Yet it is the plant sectors, along with Federal, State and Territory Governments, who are paying to eradicate the outbreaks.

To give perspective at the magnitude of the costs involved, for the two BMSB detections in Western Australia and NSW in the 2018/19 year, the cost shared response plan costed \$207,000 in WA and \$123,589 in NSW. This cost is only what was incurred in the response plans and does not include a much larger "true" cost of the eradication response which encompasses the lead agency and all other affected parties' normal commitments/non shared costs as well as flow on effects/consequential losses. Similarly, the Khapra beetle response plan in South Australia from 2016-2018, cost \$1,412,594 which was shared between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and industry.

As you are aware, the plant industry sectors contribute \$33<sup>1</sup> billion in farm gate production to the economy and provide food, fibre and foliage for the nation. We also contribute \$27<sup>1</sup> billion to export revenues, and as seen during the current COVID-19 crisis have been considered 'essential services' and are critical to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the nation.

The plant industry sectors are not the 'risk creator' yet pay for the eradication of risks created by importers to the industry, while the 'risk creators' – the importers and/or container owners/operators - are not paying any share of the eradication costs.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 7121.0 Australian Commodities 2017-18 Statistics.


The plant industry sector feels strongly that they are being disadvantaged in this process and understood that a proportionate Onshore Biosecurity Levy would be placed on the 'risk creator' and help cover the costs of the eradication programs.

We believe in the principle that Biosecurity is a 'shared responsibility' – one that is proposed, propagated and supported by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, but feel that plant industries are carrying an unfair burden of responsibility while others have a nil share. The Onshore Biosecurity Levy was a means of ensuring that there was a greater sharing of the responsibility and the proportionate share of the costs and risks.

We believe that the Department needs to consider how it can supplement its cost sharing particularly for 'at the border' or 'post-border' detections where they can be attributed to non-plant industry-based activity. We note from the press release that had the tax been hypothecated then a significant objection by industry would have been removed. Furthermore, noting the budgetary constraints which will occur due to government assistance packages the need for biosecurity funding is even more pressing.

Representatives of the Plant Industry Members would be pleased to discuss this situation and work towards a more equitable solution. We look forward to hearing from you with a proposed approach.

Yours faithfully

  
Peter Vaughan  
Chair, Plant Industry Forum of Plant Health Australia

On behalf of the following Plant Industry Member of Plant Health Australia:

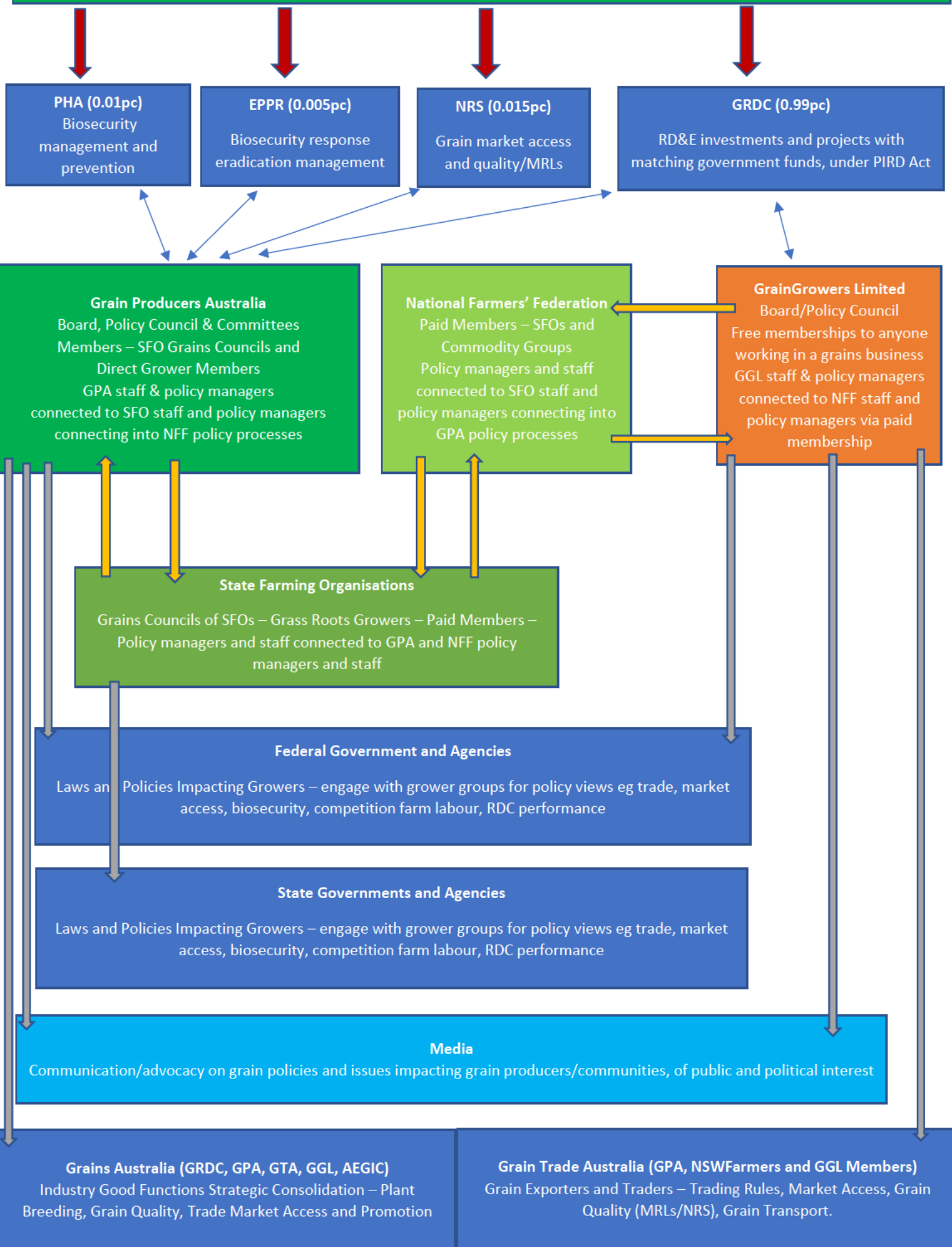




## Responsibilities for 22.50c Australian Levy-Paying Grain Producers

Growers who contribute 1.02pc of crop sale value towards funding GRDC, PHA, NRS & EPPR, under federal legislation.

\$13 billion national grains industry impacted by government policy, investments and decision-making



## Notes on Australian Crop Production

### Yield Trend

Despite the environmental challenges that face Australian grain producers, nonetheless through access to superior varieties, new crop technologies, better machinery and skilled management, crop yields in Australia continue to trend upwards (Figure 1). Since the late 1980s winter crop yields have demonstrated an annual increase of almost 0.9 per cent per annum. Winter crop production accounts for about 93 per cent of all grain production in Australia.

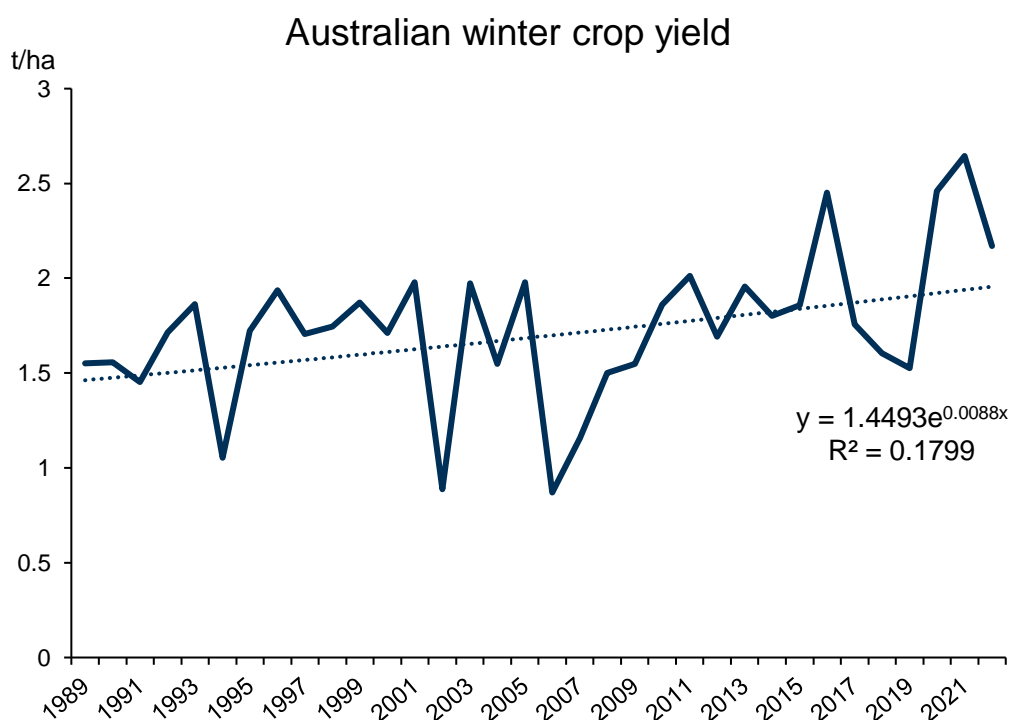


Figure 1: Australian winter crop yields since 1989

### Area and production trends

Since the early 2000s the area planted to winter crops in Australia has plateaued (Figure 2). However, winter crop production has continued to surge ahead (Figure 2), increasing the volumes of grain exported from Australia in bulk and via containers. The main winter crops grown in Australia are wheat, barley, canola and a range of pulses such as chickpeas, lentils, faba beans, field peas and lupins. Additional grain production since the early 2000s has not come from increased plantings of crops. Rather the increase in production is attributable to the persistent increase in crop yields.

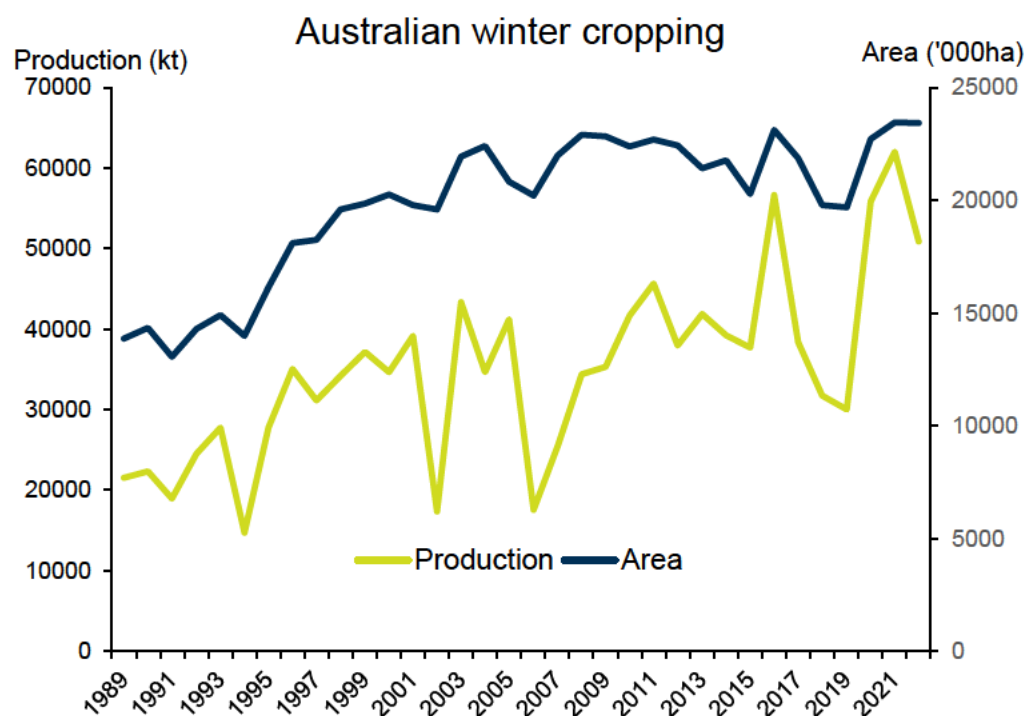


Figure 2: Australian winter crop area and production since 1989

## Value trends

As the volumes of grain produced have increased so has the value of grain production to grain farmers and the wider economy (Figure 3). Since the late 1980s when the gross value of crop production was only around \$4 billion, growth in value now reaches \$20 billion. The latest ABARES estimates (Figure 4) indicate that in 2021-22 and 2022-23, the gross value of grains, pulses and oilseeds in Australia will be \$27 billion and \$23 billion respectively.



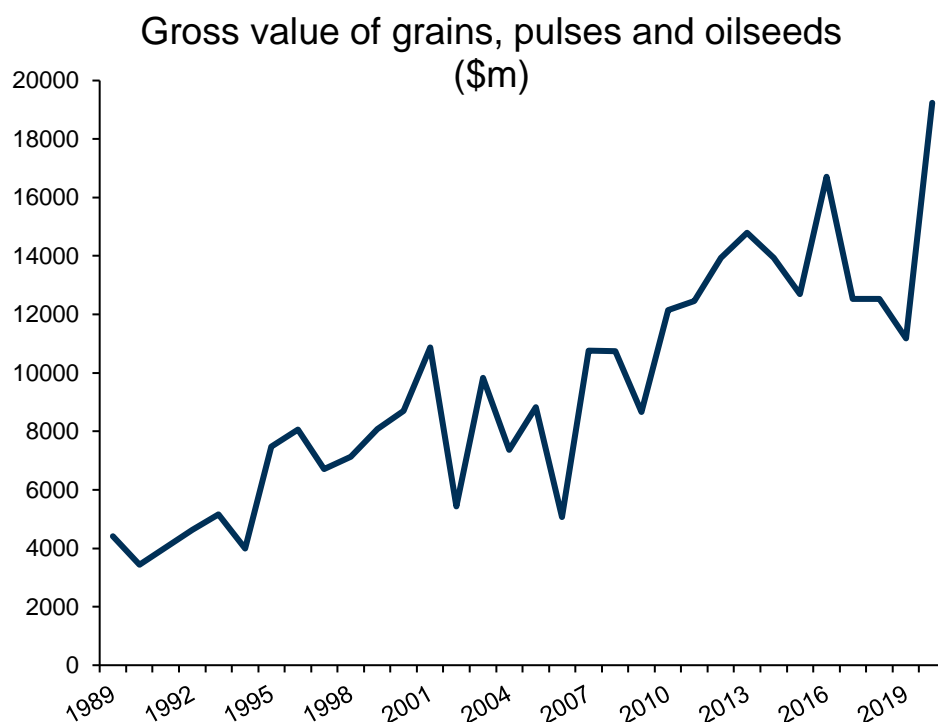


Figure 3: Gross value of Australian grain, pulse and oilseed production since 1989

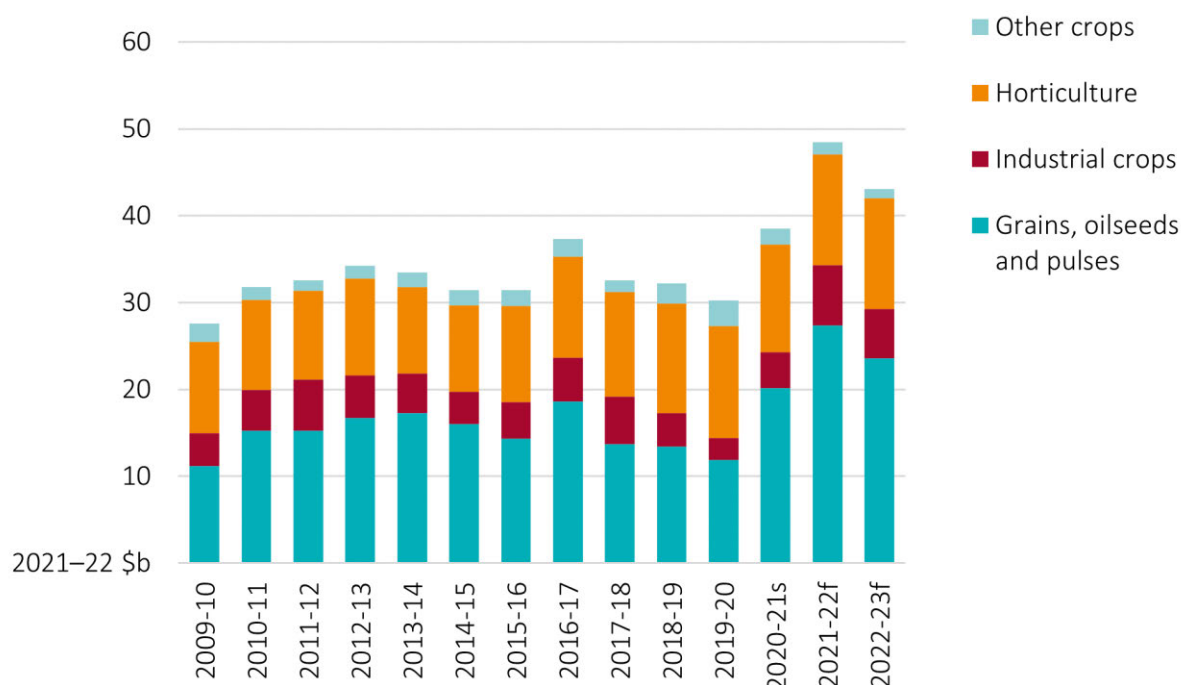


Figure 4: ABARES' estimates of the gross value of Australian crops since 2009

Due to the growth in Australian grain production, the value of Australia's grain exports now is often around \$14 billion (Figure 5).

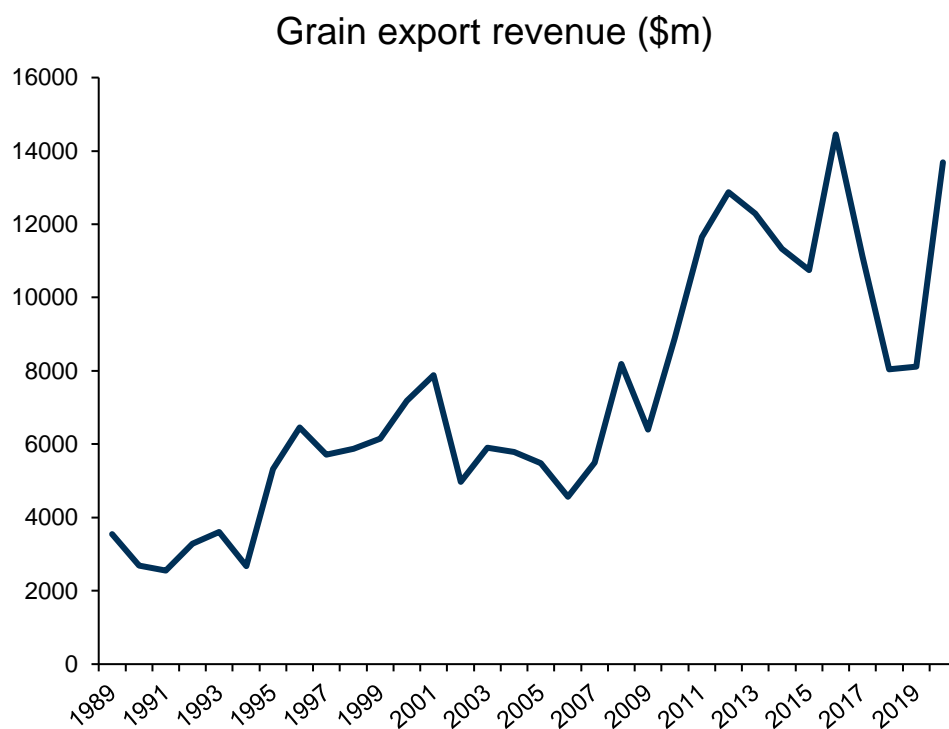


Figure 5: Value of Australian grain exports since 1989