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Clean and green cannot just be an image

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Grain hygiene is an issue for the whole value chain, starting in the paddock and ending with the consumer. Because the majority of Australia's grain is exported, and much of that has been managed by marketing boards, the two ends of the chain have been kept relatively remote.

For some growers deregulation has brought them closer to their market and its demands. It has also increased the number of links in the chain, with more on-farm storage and traders. Both developments make it even more imperative that growers fully understand their customers' grain hygiene requirements.

Most export and domestic markets have nil tolerance for insects and chemical residues in grain. Weed seeds, pathogens, toxins, sticks and stones can all impact on the end-user, just as much as pesticide residues.

While all contaminants present problems to customers, pesticide failure has the greatest capacity to restrict market access. Therefore, the issues of pesticide resistance and residues are the primary focus of the GRDC's investment in grain hygiene.

Due to its climate, Australia has a greater reliance on the use of grain fumigants and protectants than most of its trading competitors. For this reason Australia has driven many of the

issues relating to maintaining market access and the use of these products at an international level.

The ability to respond appropriately and rapidly to issues relating to grain hygiene and market access is essential. The National Working Party on Grain Protection (NWPGP) brings together representatives from all sections of the grains industry to build these responses and to negotiate at an international level on behalf of the Australian grains industry.

The GRDC identified the need for closer consultation and representation on regulatory matters and has engaged industry specialist Bill Murray to establish linkages and to ensure the GRDC is better able to prioritise research activities in relation to grain storage. Mr Murray chairs the NWPGP.

In 2007 the GRDC, together with three of the key players in grain storage and handling, approached the recently formed Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity (CRCNPB) to establish a post-harvest integrity research program. It was also proposed that research and extension on stored-grain pest management be integrated into other CRCNPB program areas.

This integrated approach not only helps Australia deliver on its clean, green image, but has resulted in the largest single budget ever available for working on stored grain.

Australia is a world leader in the safe and responsible use of agrichemicals – a fact that supports our clean, green image. However, this responsible attitude restricts the type of products that can be used and makes the requirement for holistic, integrated approaches more critical.

The potential loss of the fumigant phosphine is the greatest challenge in the area of stored-grain pest management. Strong resistance is becoming increasingly common in endemic populations of stored-grain pests. Much effort is being put into monitoring the situation, developing better methods for fumigant application and alternative fumigation products, and in preventing the importation of new pests or pests that are already resistant to phosphine.

Grain hygiene needs to be placed on an equal footing with production issues. This *Ground Cover* supplement illustrates the impact that poor grain-hygiene practices can have on the customer and the huge effort that the Australian grains industry invests in ensuring continued and developing market access.

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Cover photo: Sampling at point of sale (delivery) detects insects that may contaminate export consignments. Grain handlers are urging growers to use on-farm hygiene as the best protection against any form of grain contamination. PHOTO: CHRIS NEWMAN

