

## **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) submission to Productivity Commission inquiry into wheat export marketing arrangements**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's official national statistical agency. It provides statistics on a wide range of economic, social and environmental matters, and covers government, business and the population. The role of the ABS is to assist and encourage informed decision-making, research and discussion within governments and the community by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS implemented a suite of new collections to provide information on the Australian wheat industry following the passing of the Wheat Export Marketing Act in July 2008. Funding for this collection is provided for three years through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Data on wheat grain stocks, use (including domestic use and exports) and commitments (i.e. contracts to purchase wheat grain for domestic use and export) are now released 5 weeks after the end of each month in [Wheat Use and Stocks, Australia \(cat. no. 7307.0\)](#). A full 12 months of data are available following release of September 2009 figures on 6 November 2009.

The wheat collections have been progressively refined and outputs improved in response to industry feedback since these were first introduced. For instance, data on stocks of wheat grain held by bulk grain handlers and major grain traders have been provided on a monthly basis since March 2009 and are now released about 3 weeks after the end of the month in [Stocks of Grain held by Bulk Handling Companies and Grain Traders, Australia \(cat. no 7122.0.55.001\)](#).

Further improvements are also planned for late 2009 to expand the collections to provide monthly data on wheat grain stocks, use and commitments by agricultural businesses, including the dairy industry. The annual ABS agricultural survey has also been expanded to collect data on on-farm grain storage capacity, wheat stocks held at 30 June and annual wheat grain use. These data were released for the first time on 10 November 2009 in [Principal Agricultural Commodities, Australia, Preliminary \(cat. no 7111.0\)](#) and final data will be published in April 2010 in [Agricultural Commodities, Australia \(cat. no. 7121.0\)](#).

Additionally the ABS has an agreement with the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) to collect data on barley and selected other grains and pulses on a quarterly basis over the next 12 months. This information will be released along with wheat grain data in the existing ABS grain publications (cat. nos. 7122.0.55.001 and 7307.0) and final data will be provided for the quarter ending 30 June 2010.

The ABS relies on the cooperation of providers in producing these statistics and their cooperation is very much appreciated. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) also use the ABS data to produce a monthly report on committed and uncommitted wheat, releasing a publication containing these statistics one week after the release of the ABS data.

Some other data are also available from other sources including Port Authorities, major grain traders and commercial providers. Exporters are also required to report bulk wheat grain shipments to the Wheat Export Authority under the terms of their licence. Opportunities to further improve the available market information through integration of these data from various sources could be explored.

The ABS role in providing wheat grain statistics and the subsequent improvements to these was made possible through an agreement with DAFF. This agreement will provide data up until the end of September 2011 unless other arrangements are put in place. The ABS would seek six months notification of an intention to proceed or vary this arrangement (i.e. by the end of March 2011) to ensure continuity of market information beyond September 2011.