

Media Release

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Senate wheat recommendations don't address all concerns

Farmers will still have major concerns with the Wheat Export Marketing Bills according to the NSW Farmers' Association, following the release of the Senate Committee's final report.

NSW Farmers' Association Grains Committee Chairman John Ridley says while the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Standing Committee addressed some of the concerns of growers, there are still a number of issues outstanding which were raised in the Association's submission to the Senate Inquiry.

"In its recommendations, the Senate Committee failed to address the concerns growers have with the loss of benefits though a national pool such as the Golden Rewards Pricing Scheme," Mr Ridley said.

Mr Ridley said many growers will also be concerned that the Senate Committee didn't recognise that the majority of the costs of establishing the new system will be passed back to growers.

"Growers also wanted an industry owned entity to perform some of the fundamental administrative procedures not currently proposed to be undertaken by Government's new entity – Wheat Export Australia," Mr Ridley said.

The Senate Committee's final recommendations have now been tabled and they will now be considered by the Government – one of which is that the bills be introduced to parliament as soon as practicable to facilitate its passage before 30 June, 2008.

The Association is also concerned that the Senate Committee has failed to recognise the need for an independent body to administer a quality assurance scheme to maintain and protect Australia's reputation for the production and export of quality wheat.

"However, we are pleased the Senate Committee acknowledged the need for education programs for farmers as well as fair and open access to ports and up-country grain facilities," Mr Ridley said.

The Senate Committee has also agreed with the Association's recommendation for full disclosure of the availability of grain stocks.

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Fast Fact: Seventy-five percent of the State's land resources and extracted water are used by agriculture to produce more than \$10.23 billion in normal years out of a national production value of approximately \$39.58 billion.