

Since the Cole inquiry delivered its findings in 2006 into AWB's involvement with respect to the UN Oil for Foods Program has raised questions about whether the Single Desk (SD) for the bulk export of Australian wheat should be retained. In 2007 the Coalition government agreed on the findings of the Cole inquiry and moved to remove the monopoly export selling rights from AWB. On Tuesday 22 May 2007 the Federal Government announced that the grains industry would have until the 1 March 2008 to establish a new entity to manage the single desk, that AWBI would manage and market the 2007-08 wheat harvest; that the power of veto held by the Federal Agriculture Minister would be extended until 30 June 2008 and that exports of bags and containers would be deregulated.

The Association formed a policy and with the cooperation and the financial assistance from growers and all the State farming organisations established the Wheat Export Marketing Alliance ('WEMA') with the purpose of forming a grower owned wheat export marketing entity with the support of the Howard Federal Government.

November 2007 marked the election to office of the Rudd Labor Government the withdrawal of support for WEMA and the introduction of major reforms to wheat export marketing.

Labor proposed a new model for exporting wheat which retains a single desk for the control of wheat exports and increases choice to growers by allowing multiple accredited exporters.

Labor's plan is aimed at improving returns to growers by introducing contestability to export marketing services and allowing competitive pressures to apply in the export supply chain.

Export wheat marketing will be managed by a new export regulator Wheat Exports Australia, replacing the Export Wheat Commission and providing it with additional powers to ensure sound governance of accredited exporters of Australian wheat.

On 6 February 2008, the Government announced the formation of an Industry Expert Group (IEG) to advise on the delivery of wheat industry development functions. On 13 March 2008 the IEG published a [discussion paper](#) and invited [public comments](#).

The draft Wheat Export Marketing Bill 2008 was released for public comment on the 5 April. It proposes to implement reforms to Australia's export wheat marketing arrangements to establish a statutory entity, Wheat Exports Australia (WEA), to regulate the export of bulk wheat from Australia through a wheat export accreditation scheme.

The Association has made submissions and attended numerous hearings and met with the Government on both these matters on occasions prior to the bill being introduced to parliament in June 2008, for implementation by 1 July 2008.