



October - November 2013



GPSA chairman Garry Hansen and chief executive officer Darren Arney with Grain Trade Australia chief executive officer Geoff Honey.

AGM hears debate on test weight

TEST weight was the key issue on the agenda at the Grain Producers SA Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, September 4.

The trading standard for test weight has been increased from 74 kilograms a hectolitre to 76 kg/hl, effective this harvest. The trading standard is set by Grain Trade Australia. Bulk handlers set the receival standards for growers so they can out-turn to meet the trading standard.

The call for change was driven by GTA, which says there are increasing reports from overseas grain customers regarding varying quality and consistency in Australian grain in the past few years. More than 60 growers and industry stakeholders attended the AGM to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the change.

Speakers from GrainGrowers Limited, Grain Trade Australia and Laucke Flour Mills outlined their positions on the issue.

Laucke Flour Mills

For Laucke Flour Mills managing director Mark Laucke, test weight is not even a debate the industry should be having.

He challenged SA grain growers that they have an opportunity to differentiate themselves from their competitors who are commodity grain providers through supplying food processors with the grain they are seeking.

"Australia is on the slippery slope heading in the international commodity direction and our international competitors are loving it. That's the truth as I see it."

Mr Laucke is advocating for an effective voluntary quality assurance program to be developed with quality and safety standards that are customer and value chain focused and able to be adopted by every industry entity. He said Australia is fortunate that most, if not all, standards already exist in some form but are not currently controlled.

He said Wheat Quality Australia (WQA) has management responsibility of the former AWB-created wheat grades but has inadequate control while Grain Trade Australia has management responsibility for the trading standards of all grains.

He would like to see both organisations work together to be the formal brand owner of the grades so they can develop, set and control appropriate trading standards and certify all quality aspects of grain, not only varietal attributes.

From the chairman...



It was fantastic to see 60 growers and industry stakeholders at Grain Producers SA's Annual General Meeting last month.

A number of important issues were raised that are, or could in future, impact on the ability of grain growers to farm profitably and sustainably.

One of the key issues raised at the AGM was the potential impacts of mining on prime agricultural land, in particular grain growing. Members discussed the issue at length after a presentation by Yorke Peninsula grower Brenton Davey.

His property will be impacted by the Hillside open cut copper mine proposed by Rex Minerals. He is one of many growers across South Australia dealing with a mine on or near their property, including many on the Eyre Peninsula and Mallee.

The board has decided to establish a group to examine the interface between mining and grain production, called the Agricultural Security and Priority (ASAP) sub-committee of GPSA.

GPSA is pro-crop production and this committee will investigate the pros and cons of the issue, taking into account the differing views of members. It will be chaired by GPSA director and Yeelanna grower Max Wilksch and will soon put out a call for interested farmers to become committee members.

This group will consult with grain growers and will work closely with Primary Producers SA, which has responsibility for cross-commodity issues.

Garry Hansen,
Chairman

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Grain Trade Australia

Grain Trade Australia chief executive Geoff Honey says the change in the trading standard for test weight reflects domestic and international customer requirements. He said it was the 16th edition of the standards, which were updated regularly as customer needs changed.

"The trading standards reflect customer requirements – not what we produce, not what we want to give them but what are their requirements and outlines what the grain industry is required to do to fill those requirements," he said. "In submissions to GTA, customers have made it very clear that on the domestic side they want a higher test weight."

He said when it came to the international market, all contracts stipulated at least 76kg/hl and half stipulated 78kg/hl.

"What is it that the world wants from Australian wheat? They want a higher test weight. If it's not important then why do they put it on their contracts?" he said. "Let's promote the fact that we have higher test weights because 74 is recognised as a good feed wheat and we're better than that."



Grain growers Marty Collins, Yorketown, Tim Davey, Maitland, Elden Oster, Arthurton, and Simon Wheare, Ardrossan.

GrainGrowers Limited

GrainGrowers opposes the test weight increase. GGL's general manager – grower engagement Michael Southan says Grain Trade Australia should not force a change on growers without providing clear, scientific reasoning behind the decision.

"No evidence or data from any of our international markets has been provided by GTA," he said. "However GrainGrowers' evidence from discrete choice studies with Asian customers indicates that test weight ranks 15th out of 30 possible quality traits."

GGL believes the changes will cause a two-fold increase in the number of loads that fail test weight, based on growers' samples across Australia from the past two harvests.

"The impact will be that APH wheat that fails on test weight will be downgraded to AUH2 or to AGP, which is up to a \$40-\$50/t discount. Growers in WA will be most affected followed by NSW."

Dr Southan says the real issue is that bulk handler/traders know what test weight they have in storage so they can manage in-take at 74 kg/hl and manage out-turn at 76 kg/hl.

"Other traders do not know what is in storage so are fearful of wearing the risk of out-turning wheat less than 76 kg/hl.

Read the full articles at: www.grainproducerssa.com.au



Philip Wilsdon, Gulnare, with GPSA directors Peter Polkinghorne, Ceduna, and Gary Flohr, Lameroo.

NVT trials highlight top test weight performers

RECENT test weight data from wheat varieties in the GRDC-funded National Variety Trials in SA was presented at the AGM by the SA Grain Industry Trust, on behalf of SARDI.

SARDI's Rob Wheeler says test weight is influenced by many factors including the location or environment, the degree of stresses on the crop such as diseases and frost, harvest management such as harvest date and technique and the variety grown.

Using data from all NVT wheat sites in SA – from Penong in the west to Wolseley in the south – average test weight values (across all varieties) by season were:

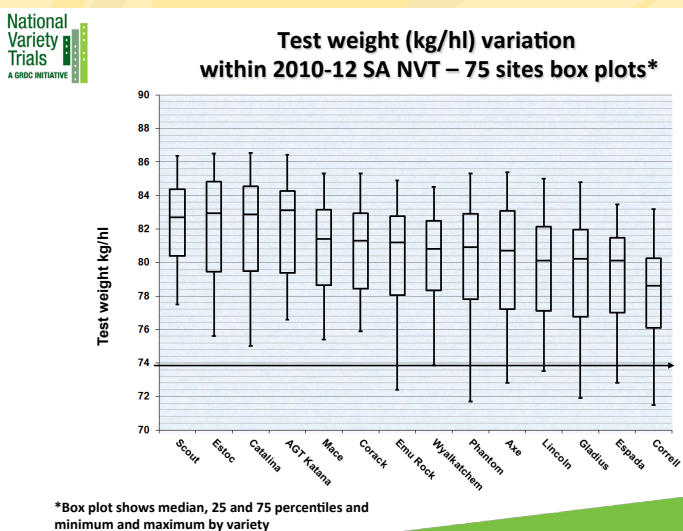
- 2009 – 77.2kg/hl
- 2010 – 77.3kg/hl
- 2011 – 80.9kg/hl
- 2012 – 82.6kg/hl, which range from 78.6 to 84.5kg/hl

Some management practices can improve the capacity for a higher test weight. For instance, harvest after rainfall events on a ripe crop or delaying harvest for several weeks beyond initial ripeness was found to greatly reduce test weights in all varieties in a trial looking at these effects. Also, in trials where disease was an issue, such as stripe rust, test weights were greatly reduced in susceptible varieties.

The importance of good harvest technique was demonstrated in an example of commercially harvested grain which initially weighed at about 64kg/hl in two barley varieties and following

one minute of rethreshing and sieving, produced a sample of around 73kg/hl.

NVT trial data can be used to demonstrate the large range in genetic variation in test weight. Within 14 varieties assessed across 75 samples from 2010-12, variety median values ranged from 78.5 to 83 kg/hl with some showing greater variation than others (see graph).



SARDI