



Communique: Grains Industry forum in response to COVID-19

2/4/2020

The COVID-19 Grains Industry forum has been established to provide a mechanism for two-way communication between government and key industry stakeholders. This is one of six industry groups, the others related to livestock, horticulture, fishing/aquaculture, food processing and trade. The grains group has approximately 55 members covering the grains industry supply chain, from grains research and development, inputs (chemical, fertiliser and seed), transport, storage and handling, processing, machinery, through to export and trade, and includes other stakeholders such as consultants, industry groups and Government. The group is supported by the Grains Industry Association of Western Australia.

Forty one grains industry people participated in the first video/teleconference held Wednesday 1 April. There has been concerted efforts by the grains industry, from growers and businesses across the supply chain, to proactively modify working arrangements and develop protocols to help manage the risk and impact of COVID-19.

A key issue raised was around border controls and the definition of essential services, especially in relation to recently announced restrictions on intrastate movement across regions. Clarification is available in the definition of essential services in the Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA) section 67 (refer to link below: Prohibition on Regional Travel Directions), which includes “any person employed or engaged in agriculture, food production or primary industry’. DPIRD is continuing to work with the WA police force to establish an online service so relevant businesses and travellers can obtain Temporary Travel Permits to clarify the authority and conditions for travel. Until this is operational, if you have to travel for agricultural purposes, carry your driver’s licence and soft and hard copy proof from your employer to support your legitimate movement across regions.

Other observations raised were:

- shortages of some herbicides across the country, but production is continuing and supplies are expected to be available by mid-April;
- supply of raw materials for manufacturing stockfeed particularly inputs of amino acids from China;
- access to rail for transporting containers to and from the eastern states;
- availability of food quality containers for shipping, which are currently on a just-in-time basis;
- reduced demand for canola oil from the food services industry; hospitality, catering and restaurant, with potential on flow effects for the stockfeed industry if full oils storages restrict crushing and availability of canola meal;
- decline in export malt barley demand;
- panic buying in Asia has been focused on non-perishable foods which presents an opportunity for Western Australian grains. In particular oats, which is considered a healing nutritious food in Asia.

Prohibition on Regional Travel Directions:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/prohibition-regional-travel-directions>

WA Regional map:

https://www.dpird.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/RegionalDevelopmentCommissions_2020%20LGA_0.pdf

Next meeting scheduled for 11am Tuesday 7 April. Written submissions and questions from industry are encouraged by sending to alex.edward@dpird.wa.gov.au