

Deregulation puts Australia's wheat export reputation at risk

The NSW Farmers' Association has opposed the Productivity Commission's recommendations to further deregulate Australian wheat export marketing.

The Commission has released its final report from its inquiry into wheat marketing arrangements, since the 2008 industry reforms.

NSW Farmers' Association Grains Committee Chair Mark Hoskinson has condemned a recommendation to abolish the Wheat Export Accreditation Scheme.

Removing Wheat Exports Australia will take away the checks and balances our wheat customers expect, putting the nation's reputation at risk, Mr Hoskinson said.

If adopted, there would be nothing to ensure a company is fit to export bulk wheat from Australia from October 1, 2011.

Nippon Flour Mills, a key Japanese premium wheat customer, has already suggested the quality of wheat it has received has dropped in the past two years.

If market transparency is the desired outcome, what we should be seeing is the WEA given the power to benchmark the performance of accredited exporters and publish export information, Mr Hoskinson said.

We would also like to see the WEA oversee quality standards, including baking and milling characteristics, water absorption and flour extraction.

The Association is also opposing the commission's proposal to remove the Port Terminal Access Test by 2014.

There's a good chance a voluntary code of conduct would lead to major grain port terminal operators dominating all aspects of terminal services, Mr Hoskinson said.

However, the association is backing recommendations for a cost-benefit approach to road and rail infrastructure investment, to develop economically and socially efficient logistics chains.

This approach would see investment in run-down rail branch lines, reducing the number of trucks hauling grain, and increasing road safety for all Australians, Mr Hoskinson said.

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